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Partisan Review 4

Marina Tsvetaeva
October on the Train

William Phillips
Educating the Educators

Jacek Trznadel
An Interview with Zbigniew Herbert

Edith Kurzweil
Freud in Montreal

Rachel Eytan
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James E. Young
Anti-war Poetry in Israel

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Witold Gombrowicz

THEATER:
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POETRY:
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REVIEWS:
Sven Birkerts
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COMMENT

We now know enough about *glasnost* to know that, despite all the speculations by "experts" who simply keep repeating each other, it is not possible, at this writing, to predict the outcome. Certainly, no one was able to predict that anything like this would take place now. However, I doubt Gorbachev can succeed completely, without relinquishing the monopoly of power of the Communist Party, which he is not about to do. He may, however, succeed partially.

It is patently difficult if not impossible to transform the structure of a society overnight, and in Russia today this would require overcoming the ingrained habits and interests of the vast, inert bureaucracy and the millions of workers who have learned to get along without working. Even more important is the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of having a free market and an open society controlled by a single, all-powerful Communist Party. What Gorbachev seems to want is a capitalist free market without capitalism.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that significant changes already have been made. The rehabilitation of Sakharov, for example, and the readmission of Trotsky and Bukharin into Russian history are monumental events, as is the removal of some restraints on writing and painting. And, short of a coup by the opposition, an historical process has been set in motion that may not be reversible. Of this possibility, Voznesensky is reported to have said in a private talk in this country that the ouster of Gorbachev would bring a return to the black days of Stalin. From this distance, it is hard to tell whether Voznesensky, because of his closeness to the political leaders, knew something we could not know or whether he was drumming up support for Gorbachev, who needs the Russian intelligentsia as much as he is needed by them.

Though Gorbachev is meeting resistance at home, he is finding a receptive audience abroad. So glad are we to see a communist leader with a semihuman face that Western opinion is lauding him for making a first step toward what we take for granted. And unless there is a sudden reversal, he is likely to impress those conservatives who think of the relation with Russia as though they were dealing with a business competitor, and those liberals who do not like to be seen as intractable anticommunists. In fact, the term "free market socialism," which permits the Soviet Union still to be considered a socialist state while abandoning even the pretense to it, has been prematurely minted by a British socialist.

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In addition, many political observers are assuming that *glasnost* will lead to a curbing of Russian military growth and political expansion. This assumption, which is based on the questionable idea that prosperity reduces the appetite for an adventurous foreign policy, could turn out to be correct. On the other hand, it might not. If the Soviet Union should be strengthened by Gorbachev, it might simply become a stronger adversary. In these matters, rosy predictions of the future often cloak bleak estimates of the present.

Another question to be asked is how the events in Russia will affect those who profess to be Marxists or socialists, especially in this country. After all, Gorbachev has announced the death of Marxism-Leninism. It has been known for some time that the Russian leaders themselves do not believe in Marx or in socialism. But Gorbachev now has made this heresy official. He also has declared that an economy run by the state, which, it will be recalled, was to do away with the social evils and economic failures of the profit system, does not work. And, according to *The New York Times*, Gorbachev is reported to have said that there is nothing wrong with wanting to make a profit.

To be sure, the tragic fate of the socialist idea in the Soviet Union does not prove that a genuine democratic socialism can never be realized. But the historical—or logical—possibility does not lend any credibility to the academic Marxists or the faithful socialists, who act as though nothing has happened to question the viability of the socialist hope. If to be a socialist is to mean more than not abandoning one's political idealism, then the entire philosophy of socialism has to be rethought. And those who cling to a belief in socialism have to indicate how the perversion of their ideals in Russia, Cuba, and Nicaragua, for example, can be avoided. It is certainly no accident that the number of Marxists increases dramatically the further one gets from Moscow and Warsaw. It would seem that Russia is in the business of exporting the myth of socialism abroad while openly abandoning it at home.

* * *

I should like to add a footnote to the report about the debate of the German historians in the last issue of *Partisan Review* and the letter by Jeffrey Herf in this one. The controversy, about national guilt and identity, is a striking example of the polarization of political thinking in some of the Western democracies.

Though it has taken a somewhat different form in America,

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there has been a sharp swing of opinion for some time to the left and the right. The left—and many liberals—reject anything with a taint of conservatism, while the right will not countenance anything associated with radicalism or liberalism.

The Congressional hearings, for example, were a theatrical illustration of the division of the nation into support of the *contras* by much of the right and opposition to them by the left, most of the liberals, the media, and a large number of Democrats. In the past, liberals occupied the space between radicals and conservatives, but lately liberals have been influenced by the current politics of the left, thus abandoning their historic role, and leaving a large hole in the political mind of the country. As a result, there has been a dearth of social commentators who have not established themselves at either end of the political spectrum. It would seem that recent history has corroborated Yeats's famous lines about the center not holding—in a world driven to extremes.

The crucial debate in Germany is essentially between the left that continues to emphasize guilt over the Nazi past and opposes the revival of nationalism, and conservative historians who argue it is time for Germans to stop drowning themselves in guilt and try to restore some kind of national pride and consciousness. Jürgen Habermas has been one of the most prominent critics of the new right in Germany and has maintained that they represent a dangerous revival of nationalism. The conservatives have responded that the left underestimates the Soviet threat and encourages a permanent state of political demoralization of the German nation.

Clearly, both sides have a point. As the left insists, the Nazi past cannot be forgotten. But, on the other hand, the memory should not obstruct the development of a national will and the pursuit of national interests. After all, most Germans today are too young to bear any responsibility for Hitler. Many of the conservatives, however, in their zeal to free Germany from the paralysis induced by guilt, have denied the uniqueness of the Holocaust by making it a part of world history. It is true, as some of them claim, that Gulag in its own way was also monstrous, but this does not lessen the monstrosity of the Holocaust. The argument has to do with the question of uniqueness, for if the Holocaust is not unique it is more easily forgettable. I see no way of settling this issue except by acknowledging that the genocidal nature of the Holocaust and its systematization of killing made it unique, but that Gulag also was one of the greatest of human disasters—and a parallel form of mass

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murder. The conservatives also have played up the heroic battle of the German soldiers against communist Russia. But this, too, should not obscure the true nature of the government for which they fought. For the fact that fascism is also anticommunist cannot mitigate any of its crimes.

It would seem obvious that there should be room for some middle ground: one that recognizes not only the lessons of the Holocaust, but also the need for a rebirth of the national ego. If Germany is to become a nation again capable of acting in its own interest and playing its assigned role in the defense of Western Europe, it can neither forget its past nor be paralyzed by it. But such a return to a normal political life by the German people can be accomplished only, it seems to me, by extricating themselves from the extremes of the left and the right. I am aware of a considerable body of opinion, inside and outside of Germany, that opposes not only a restoration of nationalism but also the unification of Germany, on the ground that a strong Germany would once again threaten the peace of the world. One can only speculate about such possibilities, but, in the light of the general revulsion against the Hitler era, it seems highly unlikely. And it is also of some interest to note that a weak and floundering Germany would suit the political purposes of the Soviet Union.

* * *

The recent flurry of writing and publicity about Sartre—and to a lesser extent about Simone de Beauvoir—would seem to indicate a Sartre revival. There have been several biographies, a number of studies, and a lengthy portrait of Sartre on public television. But despite a lingering interest in Sartre by his admirers, I do not think there is any widespread nostalgia for Sartre's ideas or his role in postwar France. Certainly, the intellectual mood of France today is quite antithetical to the things both celebrated writers stood for. Sartre's resurrection seems to be to some extent a publishing event and a product of the constant search of the media to discover a new face or to rediscover an old one. If there is an intellectual meaning to the Sartre-de Beauvoir return, it might be because deconstruction, the philosophy that succeeded Sartre, was too esoteric to take hold of the popular interest, and in any event is on the way out, and because the feminist movement has given new life to Simone de Beauvoir. It could also be that anyone with a generalizing mind and a larger scope would have a special appeal, if only temporarily, at a time of specialization and a shortening of intellectual horizons.

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The piece on Sartre in the current issue of *Partisan Review* goes into Sartre's philosophy, fiction, and politics. But I should like to add a note on the ideas that tied the facets of his life and work together. In this respect, he lived, as they say, at the right time. France was torn politically and intellectually. It was steeped in shame and guilt. It was ambivalent about its past and uncertain of its future. It lacked a national will. Conservatives were looked at with suspicion because of the collaboration, while the communists who had been active in the resistance became a symbol of activism, though a support of them required a suppression of the knowledge about the nature of the Soviet regime. France needed a figure who could be a symbol of the personal freedom to act and the philosophical necessity to do so. Sartre supplied this need by ostensibly combining the idea of freedom he extracted from existentialism with the historical compulsion he thought he found in Marxism.

But he never could fuse these two opposing myths successfully. This is why all his life he shuttled between supporting the Communist Party and the Soviet Union and distancing himself from them. He was in effect an inconstant fellow traveller. Sometimes he even condoned the most barbaric Soviet acts. Early in the fifties he broke with Camus, who insisted on exposing Gulag. Yet later in his life he was outspoken—along with Simone de Beauvoir—in his support of Israel, for which he received the customary abuse of the communists.

I think this split in Sartre's political philosophy and in his political activities had much to do with the promotion of his glittering career, though we should not underestimate his great intellectual gifts and his flair for displaying himself. But this failure to integrate himself may also have affected the quality of his philosophy and his fiction, and might also be the reason why his politics were neither original nor admirable.

As for Simone de Beauvoir—now being elevated by the publicity being lavished on this odd and charismatic couple, whose apparent ability to combine freedom and necessity in their love life must be envied by many people—the disciple is clearly below the master in talent and accomplishment. She was a free-wheeling disciple and lover. Her novel about her love life in America was probably the best thing she wrote—though a bit too literal. Her *The Second Sex* has to be seen as an early example of feminist writing, full of insights but also of serious contradictions. Her book on America was studded with preconceived anti-American notions and factual errors that

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were never subjected to correction by direct experience or observation.

Still, when all this is said, it cannot be denied that she was a very attractive and striking person, and when she was not displaying her abilities as an ideologue, she had a lively intelligence, one that within the limits of her beliefs and assumptions was able to handle ideas with the facility we are accustomed to in French intellectuals. When Simone de Beauvoir came here after the war, there was much talk and argument, during which her two sides—her ideological stubbornness and her intellectual and personal charm—stood out.

W.P.

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Marina Tsvetaeva

OCTOBER ON THE TRAIN (NOTES FROM THOSE DAYS)

Two and a half days—not a bite, not a swallow. (Throat tight). Soldiers bring newspapers—printed on rose-colored paper. The Kremlin and all the monuments have been blown up. The 56th Regiment. The buildings where the Cadets and officers refused to surrender have been blown up. 16,000 killed. By the next station it's up to 25,000. I am silent. I smoke. One after another, travelers get on trains heading back.

Dream (November 2, 1917, nighttime).

We are escaping. A man with a rifle comes up from the cellar. I take aim with my empty hand.—He lowers the rifle.—A sunny day. We are climbing on some debris. S.[1] is talking about Vladivostok. We ride in a carriage through the ruins. A man with sulphuric acid.

Letter in a notebook.

If you are still alive, if I am to see you again—listen: yesterday, approaching Kharkov, I read *Iuzhnyi Krai*. 9,000 killed. I cannot tell you about this night because *it's not over yet*. Gray morning now. I'm in the corridor. Try to understand! I ride, and I write to you and right now don't know—but here follow words which I cannot write down.

We are approaching Oryol. I'm scared to write to you the way I want to—I'm afraid I'll burst into tears. This is all a terrible dream. I try to sleep. I don't know how to write to you. When I'm writing, you—are there, since I'm writing you! and then—ach!—the 56th Regiment, the Kremlin. (Do you remember the huge keys you used to lock the gate for the night?) But most important, most important, most important—you, you yourself, with your self-destructive instinct. Could you actually stay at home? If everyone stayed home, you would go out alone all the same. Because you are irreproachable. Because you can't stand for others to be killed. Because you are a lion, giving away a lion's share: to give life—to everyone else, rabbits and foxes. Because you are selfless and balk at self-preservation,

---

Editor's Note: "October on the Train" was originally published in an emigré journal in 1927. It was to have been part of a book to have been titled, *Earthly Signs*. Translation © 1987 Jamey Gambrell.

1. Sergei Efron, Tsvetaeva's husband.

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because "me" is not important for you, because I knew this all from the first moment!

Should God grant this miracle—leave you among the living, I shall follow you like a dog.

The news is vague, I don't know what to believe. I read about the Kremlin, Tverskaia, the Arbat, the "Metropol," Voznesensky Square, the mountains of corpses. In yesterday's (the 1st) issue of the SR newspaper *Kurskaia Zhizń*, I read that disarmament had begun. Other papers (today's) write of fighting. I'm not allowing myself the will to write now—but I've imagined a thousand times how I'll walk into the house. Will it be possible to enter the city?

Soon we'll be at Oryol. It's about two in the afternoon now. We'll be in Moscow at 2 in the morning. And if I walk into the house—and there's no one there, not a soul? Where shall I look for you? Perhaps the house is no longer there? I keep feeling—this is a terrible dream. I keep expecting that any second now something will happen and there won't have been any newspapers, nothing. *That I'm dreaming, that I'll wake up.*

Throat tight, as if fingers are squeezing it. I keep loosening, pulling on my collar. Seriozhenka. I've written down your name and I can't write any more.

* * *

Three days—not a word with anyone. Only with soldiers, to buy newspapers. (Terrifying rose-colored sheets, sinister. Theatrical death posters. No—Moscow colored them! They say there's no paper. There was, but they used it all up. (To some that's all there is to it—to others—it's a sign.)

Finally—someone speaks: "What's wrong Miss? You ain't even taken a bite of bread the whole trip. I've been on the train with you since Lozovaia. I keep watching and thinking—when's our young Miss there going to eat? Then I think, there, she's getting some bread now—no—writing in that book again. What are you now, studying for an exam or something?"

I, dimly: "Yes."

The speaker is a workman, black eyes, like coal, a black beard, something of an affectionate Pugachov. A bit eerie, and pleasant. We talk. He complains about his sons: "They're infected with this new life, they've caught this mange. You, Miss, you're a young person, you're likely to see things different, but to my way of thinking—all these red rabbles, these obscene freedoms—it's nothing but a temptation of the Antichrist. He's a Prince, and his power is great, he's just been biding his time, waiting till the right hour's come—

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gathering his strength. You come to the countryside now—life there's gray, the women are gray-haired. 'A devil, they say, a clown.' Look—he's tossing cabbage stalks. But what kind of clown when he's a born prince, the light created. You can't fight him with cabbage stalks, you'll be needing the angelic hosts. . . . "

A fat officer squeezes into the compartment with us: a round face, mustache, about fifty years old, a bit vulgar, foppish.

"I have a son in the 56th Regiment! I'm terribly worried. All of a sudden I think—what the devil if. . . . " [For some reason I calm down immediately] "And he's no fool either; why should he want to go into the thick of it?" [My calm passes instantaneously] "He's an engineer, and bridges, well, it doesn't much matter who you build them for: a tsar, or a republic—as long as they hold up!"

I, unable to hold back:—"My husband's in the 56th."—"Hu—usband!? You're married? Well, I'll be. I'd never have thought! And here I thought, Miss, you were finishing high school. In the 56th regiment is he? You must also be worried sick."—"I don't know how I'll make it"—"You'll make it! And you'll see each other. Mercy me, with such a wife—how could he go into the shooting! Your husband isn't his own enemy. He's very young then too?" "Twenty-three."—"There now, you see! And you're still worried! Well, I can tell you, if I were 23 and had such a wife I wouldn't. . . . But then again, here I am 53 and don't have anywhere near such a wife and I still. . . . [That's the whole point! I think to myself. But just the same, for some reason, clearly recognizing the ridiculousness of it all, I calm down.]

* * *

The workman and I arrange to ride from the station together. And although it's not at all on the way for either of us—he's going to Taganka and I'm going to Povarskaia—I continue to plan it out: a deferral of the next half hour. (In a half hour we'll be in Moscow.) The workman—is a bulwark, and for some reason I fantasize that he *knows everything*; even more—that he is himself of the princely host (not without reason Pugachov!) and that precisely *because he is the enemy* he will save me (S.).—Has already saved.—And that he sat down in this compartment deliberately—to protect and reassure—and that Lozovaia is beside the point, he could simply have appeared in the window—amid the steppes, in stride with the train. And that in the station in Moscow he'll turn to ash.

* * *

Ten minutes to Moscow. It's already beginning to grow light.—Or is it just the sky? My eyes used to the darkness? I'm afraid

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of the road, of the hour in the cab, of the approaching house (of death—for if he's been killed I'll die). I'm afraid to hear.

Moscow. Blackness. You can enter the city with a pass. I have one, not the right one at all, but it doesn't matter. (It's for the return trip to Theodosia: I'm the wife of an ensign.) I call a cabby: the workman has of course vanished. I ride. The cabby talks, I drift, the pavement bumps along. People with lanterns approach three times.—"Pass!"—I proffer my pass. They give it back without looking. The first bell. It's about 5:30. It's gotten lighter. (Or does it only seem so?) Empty streets—emptied of habitants. I don't recognize the road, I don't know it (we're taking a detour)—the feeling is that time is to the left, like a thought sometimes is in the brain. We're headed somewhere *through* someplace, and for some reason there's the smell of hay. (Maybe, I think, this is—Haymarket Square and that's why there's—hay?) The outposts rumble slightly: someone will not surrender.

Not a thought—about the children. If S. is no longer, then neither am I, and neither are they. Alya won't live without me, she won't want to, won't be able to. As I won't without S.

* * *

The Church of Boris and Gleb. Ours, the one in Povarskaia.* We turn into a side street, ours—Boris and Gleb Lane. The white house of the church secondary school—I always called it "Volière": a connecting gallery and children's voices. And on the left, the old-fashioned green house standing at attention (a town governor once lived there and policemen stood in front.) Yet another house. And ours.

The steps opposite two trees. I get down. I take my things down. Detaching themselves from the gates, two men in half-uniform approach. "We're the house security guard. What can we do for you?"—"I'm so and so and I live here." "We don't have orders to let anyone in at night.—"Then please call the maid from apt. 3." (Thought: now, now, now they'll say it. They live here and they know everything.)

—"We're not your servants."—"I'll *pay*."

They go. I wait. I'm not alive. I am legs on which I stand, hands with which I hold the suitcases (I didn't set them down after all). And I can't hear my heart. If not for the call of the cabby I

*There's another one on Arbat Square.—*M. T.*

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wouldn't have realized I've been waiting a long time—a monstrously long time.

"Well then Miss, what'll it be, will you let me go or not? I still have to go to Pokrovskaia."

"I'll pay you extra."

The quiet terror that he'll up and leave: my last bit of life is in him; the last bit of life *until*. . . . However, setting down my things I open my purse: three, ten, twelve, seventeen rubles. . . . I need fifty. Where will I get them if. . . . Footsteps. The sound of one door and then another. The entry door opens now. A woman in a scarf, a stranger.

Not giving her a chance to speak, I ask:

"Are you the new maid?"

"Yes."

"Has the master been killed?"

"He's alive."

"Wounded?"

"No."

"But how? Where has he been all this time?"

"In Alexandrovsky with the cadets.—What a terrible fright we've had. Praise God, the Lord had mercy. Only they've gotten awfully thin. Right now they're on N-sky St. with friends. The little ones are there and the Master's sisters . . . *All* healthy, well and safe, just waiting for you."

"Would you have 33 rubles to pay the cabby?"

"Goodness gracious, of course—we'll just bring in your things."

We bring in my things, let the cabby go, and Dunya offers to accompany me. I grab one of two loaves of Crimean bread to bring with me. We go. Ravaged Povarskaia. Cobblestones. Potholes. The sky grows a bit lighter. Bells.

We turn into a side street. A seven-story house. I ring. Two people in fur coats and hats. In the striking of a match—the gleam of a pince-nez. The match right in my face.

"What is it?"

"I've just arrived from the Crimea and I want to see my family."

"But this is unheard of—bursting into a house at 6 in the morning!"

"I want to see my family."

"You'll get there all in good time. Come back around 9 o'clock and then we'll see."

At this point the maid steps in.

"What's wrong with you gentlemen, they have small children,

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heaven knows how long it's been since they've seen each other. I've known them a long time, I'll vouch for her—she's a trustworthy soul, has her own house on Polianka."

"All the same, we can't let you in."

At this point, unable to hold back: "And who are *you*?"

"We're the house security guard."

"I'm so and so, the wife of my husband and the mother of my children. Let me in, I'll go in anyway."

And, half admitted, half pushing—I fly up six flights—to the seventh.

* * *

(And so it has remained with me, my first vision of the bourgeoisie in the Revolution: ears hiding in fur hats, souls hiding in fur coats, heads hiding in necks, eyes hiding behind glasses. In the light of a sputtering match—a blinding vision of cowardly *hides*.)

* * *

From below, the voice of the maid: God bless!

I knock. They open.

"Seriozha's sleeping? Where's his room?"

And, a second later, from the threshold:

"Seriozha! It's me! I just arrived. The people downstairs—are vile. But the Cadets won all the same! Are you here or not?"

It's dark in the room. Having reassured myself:

"I travelled three days. I brought you some bread. I'm sorry it's stale. The sailors—are vile! I met Pugachov. Seriozhenka, you're alive and. . . . "

* * *

The evening of the same day we leave for the Crimea: S., his friend G-tsev, and I.

* * *

A Little Piece of the Crimea.

The arrival in a mad snow storm in Koktebel. The gray-haired sea. The enormous, almost physically burning joy of Max V.[2] at the sight of Seriozha alive. Enormous loaves of white bread.

* * *

The apparition of Max V. on the steps of the tower, with a volume by Taine on his knees, frying onions. And while the onions are frying, reading aloud to S. and me, the destinies of Russia tomorrow and beyond.

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2. The Russian poet Maximilian Voloshin, 1877-1932.

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"And now, Seriozha, there will be such and such. . . . Remember."

And softly, carefully, almost rejoicing, he shows us picture after picture. Like a kind magician revealing his secrets to children, he relates the entire Russian Revolution five years in advance: the terror, the Civil War, the executions, the military outposts, La Vendée, the atrocities, the loss of godliness, the unloosed spirits of the elements, blood, blood, blood. . . .

* * *

With G-tsev to get bread.

A café in the Otuzy. Bolshevik appeals on the walls. Long-bearded Tatars at the tables. How slowly they drink, how sparingly they speak, how importantly they move. Time has stopped for them. The 17th century—the 20th century. Even the cups are the same, dark blue, with cabalistic signs, no handles. Bolshevism? Marxism?

Scream your lungs out posters! What do we have to do with your machines, your Lenins, Trotskys, your new-born proletariats, your decaying bourgeoisie . . . We have Uraza, mulla, grapes, a dim memory of a great queen . . . This is the boiling sediment at the depths of these gilded cups. We—are outside, we—are above, we—are a long time ago. It's for you—to be, we—have passed. We—are once and forever. We—are not.

* * *

Moonlit twilight. A mosque. The herds of goats return. A girl in a raspberry skirt down to the floor. Tobacco pouches. An old woman, gnawed like a bone.

The sculpturesqueness of ancient races.

* * *

In the train compartment (the return trip to Moscow, Nov. 25.)

"Breshko-Breshkovskaia's[3] a bastard too! She said—you have to fight!"

* * *

"To destroy the poor class even more, and indulge their own blisses again!"

* * *

"Poor Mother Moscow, clothing the entire front! We can't complain about Moscow! The papers cause all the trouble. The Bolsheviks are right when they say they don't want to spill blood, they're keeping an eye on things."

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3. Catherine Breshkovsky, 1844–1934, one of the founders of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, known as the "grandmother of the Russian Revolution."

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* * *

In the compartment air—so thick you could cut it with a knife—three words sound: bourgeois, junkers, bloodsuckers.

* * *

"So their business will be better!"

* * *

"Our revolution's young, but in France theirs is old, stale."

* * *

"A peasant, a prince, what's the difference—their hides are the same! (I, thinking to myself: but some are only out to save their own—that's the whole point).

* * *

"The officer, comrades, is the number one bastard. In my opinion, he's of the very lowest education."

* * *

Across from me, on the bench, sleeps a downcast, emaciated, prudent Vikzhel.[4]

"God, comrades, was the first revolutionary!"

* * *

"You're from Moscow, right? We don't have any of those types in the south."

(An ensign from Kerch)

* * *

An argument about tobacco.

"A lady, and she smokes! Everybody's equal, sure enough, only it don't do for a lady to smoke. Her voice gets rough from the tobacco, and her mouth smells like a man's. A lady should suck candies, spray herself with perfumes so she'll have a sweet fragrance. Or else a young gent'll pay his compliments—and there you are breathing the same man's smell—ugh!

If there's anything the masculine sex can't stand to abide, it's a man's smell. What do you say Miss?"

I: "Of course you're right, a bad habit!"

Another soldier: "But I think, er I mean comrades: the female sex ain't got nothing to do with it. I mean, the smoke goes in your throat—and everybody's throat's the same. Tobacco—bread, what's the difference. So what if young gentlemen won't love them, maybe it's better—lot of brothers run around wagging their tails. LOO-ove!

4. Acronym of the All-Russian Aministrative Committee of The Railroad Workers Union formed in August 1917, which did not support the October Revolution and was disbanded for counter-revolutionary activities in January 1918.

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Dogs—not love! And whoever falls in love—it's with the soul, and he'll take her no matter what smell, he'll even roll the cigarettes himself. I'm right, ain't I—what do you think Miss?"

I: "Right. My husband always rolls my cigarettes. And he doesn't smoke himself."

(I'm lying.)

My defender—to someone else: "So she ain't a Miss after all. Hey brother, you blundered! And your husband, he'll be a student or something?"

I, remembering caution: "No, well, just my husband . . . . "

The other one, explaining the situation: "That means they live off their capital."

My defender: "You'll be going to him then?"

I: "No, I'm going for the children, he stayed in the Crimea."

"What—you have your own dacha in the Crimea?"

I, calmly—"Yes, and a house in Moscow." (I made up the dacha.)

—Silence—

My defender: "You sure are brave, little Missus. Come, you don't really want to admit to such things now, do you? These days a body's so afraid he's happy to bury his house, his money, even himself in the ground with his own two hands!"

I: "Why bury oneself? There'll come a time when others will bury us. And anyway, this isn't the first time it's happened: self-buriers. They used to bury themselves alive in the ground—to save their souls. And now it's to save their bodies."

—They all laugh, and I laugh too.

My defender: "And how come your husband ain't with the simple people?"

I: "No, he's with *all the people*."

"I don't quite get you."

I: "As Christ commanded: neither poor, he said, nor rich: but men and Christ in every one."

My defender, joyfully: "That's it, thou art not guilty of thy princeliness, and thou art not guilty of thy poverty" . . . (a bit suspiciously) "And you Ma'am . . . . you wouldn't be a Bolshevik?"

Someone else: "What kind of Bolshevik when they have their own house?"

The first one: "It don't mean nothing, lots of them are in the educated class—gentry too, merchants. More and more it's the gentry that go over to the Bolsheviks . . . " (Glancing, unsure)" And she has short hair."

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I: "That's the fashion nowadays."**

A sailor unexpectedly breaks, rather, bursts into the discussion.

"Comrades, you ain't thinking this thing out straight, you ain't got no consciousness. It's these booklearned ones, this gentry, these damned junkers that have filled Moscow with blood. Bloodsuckers! Bastards! (To me): "And you, comrade, some advice: less talk about Christs and dachas in the Crimea. That time is over."

My defender, scared. "Ach—she's just young—What kind of a dacha could they have—a little shack on three legs, like I've got in the country . . . . [Trying to make peace]: Take a look at her shoes . . . look how cheap her boots are . . . . "

* * *

About this sailor. Uninterrupted obscenities. The others (he's a Bolshevik!) are silent.

Finally, I ask him, sweetly, "Why do you swear so? Do you really enjoy it?"

The sailor: "I'm not swearing, comrade—it's just a saying of mine."

The soldiers roar with laughter.

I, contemplatively: "A bad saying."

* * *

This very same sailor, by the open window in Oryol, in the tenderest voice: "What a lovely breeze!

* * *

Alya (4 years old)

"Marina, you know Pushkin didn't say it right! He said:

Guns fire from the wharf
Calling the ships to join them

But it should be:

Guns fire *from the house*
(After the uprising)

Alya's prayer during and since the uprising:

"Save us Lord and grant us grace: Marina, Seriozha, Irina, Lyuba, Asya, Andriusha, the officers and not-officers, the Russians and not-Russians, the French and not-French, the wounded and not-wounded, the healthy and not-healthy—all friends and strangers."

Moscow, October-November 1917.

Translated from the Russian by Jamey Gambrell

**The fashion came later. For Russia it came along with typhus, i.e., in '19 or '20; for the West I don't know from or with what, in '23 or '24—*M. T.*

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David Montenegro

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH BRODSKY

DM: You've just published *Less Than One*, your first collection of essays. Do you find prose gives you a new latitude? What problems and pleasures do you find in writing prose that you don't find in writing poetry?

JB: Well, to begin with, I simply happened to write those pieces over the years. On several occasions, I've been commissioned for one thing or another, and I just wanted to do whatever was asked of me in each particular instance. What pleases me really about the book is that it's something that was never meant to be. Perhaps a collection or two of poems was in the cards, but a book of prose—especially in English—wasn't. It strikes me as something highly illegitimate.

As for the difficulties or differences, essentially the operations of prose and poetry are not so different. In prose, you have a more leisurely pace, but in principle prose is simply spilling some beans, which poetry sort of contains in a tight pod.

DM: You once wrote that prose is hateful to you because it doesn't have poetry's discipline.

JB: How shall I put it? To use an almost paradoxical term, that's one of prose's shortcomings. That's specifically what makes prose lengthy. What I value about poetry, if I can simply estrange myself to look with a kind of cold, separate eye at these things, is that in verse your mind—reader's or writer's—moves much faster, for verse is overtly final and terribly concise, it's a condensed thing. In prose there is nothing that prevents you from going sideways, from digressing. In poetry, a rhyme keeps you in check.

Basically, my attitude towards prose—apart from its being the vehicle of making a living because, in fact, prose is paid for, if not more handsomely, at least more readily than poetry—the thing that I can say in praise of prose is that it's perhaps more therapeutic than poetry. For poetry's risk, its uncertainty, well, its anticipation of failure is terribly high. And after a while one gets rather edgy or bilious.

In prose, I think, it's harder to fail. You simply sit and write, and as the day passes you've written several pages. Then the next day, and so forth. That in part perhaps explains why there are so

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Editor's Note: This interview took place on April 8, 1986.

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many novels around. Prose gives a writer confidence whereas poetry does exactly the opposite.

DM: Efim Etkind, in his book *Notes of a Non-Conspirator*, called you a very modern poet. He said even when you were quite young you were presenting problems to yourself and dealing with problems presented to you by your times. What new problems does the modern poet face unlike those faced by the nineteenth-century poet, or even the poet prior to World War Two?

JB: That's a big question indeed. Now one of the main problems that a poet today faces—modern or not modern—is that the body of poetry prior to him—the heritage, that is—is larger, which makes you simply wonder whether you have anything to add to that body, whether you're simply going to modify some of your predecessors or whether you're going to be yourself.

But basically it's not so much the question asked at the threshold, whether you're going to modify somebody or not. You ask this subsequently, with the benefit of hindsight. It's a question you ask yourself because of the critics around. But it's precisely because you have such great people before yesterday who breathe on your neck, that you have to go a bit further, where theoretically nobody has been before. It simply makes it more difficult to write, because you are quite conscious of not wanting to be a parrot. And the people before you were quite great. To think that you can say something qualitatively new after people like Tsvetaeva, Akhmatova, Auden, Pasternak, Mandelstam, Frost, Eliot, and others after Eliot—and let's not leave out Thomas Hardy—reveals either a very enterprising fellow or a very ignorant one. And I would bill myself as the latter.

When you start writing, you know less about what took place before you. It's only in the middle of your life that you come to amass this knowledge, and it can dwarf you or mesmerize you.

That's one thing, one problem for the modern poet. The other is obviously that the modern poet lives in a world where what had been regarded as values, as virtues and vices, say twenty or thirty years ago, have, if not necessarily swapped places, at least been questioned or compromised entirely. A modern poet presumably doesn't live in a world which is ethically, let alone politically, as polarized as was the situation before the war. But I think the polarization is still quite clear. I don't really know what Etkind had in mind. Presumably, what he had in mind was a difference between the modern poet and a poet, let's say, of the turn of the century. Our predecessors perhaps had more to believe in. Their pantheon, or

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their shrines, were a bit more populated than ours. We are one way or another, in a sense, awful agnostics.

But there are agnostics and agnostics. I would say that the poet worships perhaps only one thing in the final analysis, and that has no embodiment except in words, that is . . . language. His attitude towards the Supreme Deity who is absent is more of a reproach for His absence than a pure jeering or else hosannas. Perhaps I am modern in that I am living in my own time and to some extent I reflect—what I write reflects—the sensibility of the people who speak my language towards their reality. In that respect, of course, I am modern. What else could I be? Old-fashioned? Conservative? Well, I'm conservative in terms of form, perhaps. In terms of content, in terms of the attitude towards reality, and the sensibility, I am fairly—well, I hope—*au courant*.

DM: You mentioned the polarization of good and evil. Do you think there's a blurring of those categories now?

JB: Not for an attentive eye, not for an attentive soul. But blurring the distinctions has become, indeed, an industry. It's done either deliberately by the forces of evil—for instance, by a certain political doctrine and its advocates, by its propaganda outfits—or it's done by honest, self-questioning people. But ultimately it's done by those who thrive on questioning and compromising things, the smart alecks who try to turn every idea, every reality inside out. And, of course, there's a great deal of gray area now. Well, that's fine by me. The greater the blur is, the more glory to you if you manage to sort it out. It's always been the case—the blur, that is. But today, given the population explosion, we have a quantum increase in devil's advocates as well. Doubt nowadays is more in vogue than convictions. To put it kindly—doubt is a conviction. Basically, we live in a period which is quite similar in tenor to certain stages of the Enlightenment.

DM: The scrutiny of all the preconceptions . . .

JB: . . . of all the preconceived notions indeed. Except, a Russian differs here. The results of scrutiny by a Russian may yield results totally different from those of his Western counterparts. For example, during the Enlightenment, scientific evidence led people to the denial of Supreme Being. Certain Russians—for example, Lomonosov and Derzhavin—were saying exactly the opposite, that the abundance of this evidence testified to the intricacy of the world, which is a divine creation.

DM: As a poet, you're conspicuous in that you often use religious

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imagery. Do you think it's still effective? Is it a common language?
JB: In my view, yes it is. At least it's common vis-à-vis my Russian audience. And I'm either generous or cynical enough to think that my Russian audience is not that qualitatively different in the final analysis from my English audience. But maybe that's wishful thinking on my part. I think it's still a language comprehensible to a certain percentage of people, and that's enough. For no percentage of the people is merely a small one. How small are, let's say, ten people, or six?
DM: Marek Oramus, while interviewing Zbigniew Herbert, said that Herbert *corrects* mythology. How do you approach it?
JB: You animate it, you try to make sense out of all of this, out of all that you've inherited. That's what you do. You're not really correcting it, you're making sense out of it. It's simply interpreted. It's the function of the species to interpret the Bible, mythology, the Upanishads, anything we have inherited, including our own dreams.

Basically, each era, each century, not to mention each culture has its own Greece, its own Christianity, its own Orient, its own mythology. Each century simply offers its own interpretation, like a magnifying glass, in a sense. We're just yet another lens. And it simply indicates the distance that grows between us and myths, and I think the attempt to interpret is essentially proportionate to the distance.
DM: You mentioned in one essay—and I'll just quote you—"At certain periods of history it is only poetry that is capable of dealing with reality by condensing it into something graspable, something that otherwise couldn't be retained by the mind." What are some other functions of poetry? What is the power of language through poetry?
JB: Poetry sells perhaps better as the record of human sensibility. To give you an example, the age of the Augustan poets. I think if we have a notion of Roman and of the human sensibility of the time it's based on Horace, for instance, the way he sees the world, or Ovid or Propertius. And we don't have any other record, frankly.
DM: This might not be pertinent at all since the poet's fascination with language isn't with its utility, but what does poetry now provide that prose doesn't, that religion doesn't, that philosophy doesn't? How strong is language in fending off a sense of chaos, in defending people or their sensibility from brutality?
JB: Well, I don't really know how to answer this, except by pointing out the very simple fact that speech is a reaction to the world, some kind of grimacing in the darkness or making faces behind the bas-

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tards' backs, or else controlling your fright or vomit. It's a reaction to the world, and in that sense it's functional. Protective? Does it protect you? No, more than likely not. It really *exposes* you. But it's quite possible that the exposure leads to the real test of your quality, of your durability. To say the least, producing something of harmony today is tantamount to saying in the face of chaos: "Look, you can't break me, not yet." And "me" in the language stands for everybody.

I don't really know what the function of poetry is. It's simply the way, so to speak, the light or dark refracts for you. That is, you open the mouth. You open the mouth to scream, you open the mouth to pray, you open the mouth to talk. Or you open the mouth to confess. Well, each time presumably you are forced by something to do so.

DM: When you first arrived in the United States in 1972, you said one fear you had was that your work would suffer a kind of paralysis because you would be living outside the environment of your native language. But, in fact, you've been prolific. What effect *has* living here had on your poetry?

JB: I don't know. I guess what I was saying then simply reflected my fears. Prolific I was. I would imagine that I would have been as, if not more, prolific, with no less interesting consequences for myself and for my readers, had I stayed at home. I think that fear expressed in 1972 reflected more the apprehension of losing my identity and that self-respect as a writer. I think what I was really unsure of—and I'm not so sure today, as a matter of fact—was that I wouldn't become a simpleton, because the life here would require much less of me, not as subtle an operation on a daily basis as in Russia. And indeed, in the final analysis, some of my instincts have dulled, I think. But, on the other hand, by being apprehensive about that sort of thing, you're trying to make up your own mind. And, after all, you perhaps break even. You end up as neurotic as you would have been otherwise. Only faster, though you can't be sure of that either.

DM: You used the word stereoscopic before. Do you think being in another country gives you a sort of double vision?

JB: But, of course, if only because here a great world of information is available to you. I was talking not long ago with a friend of mine, and we were discussing the shortcomings of being away from our country. And we came to the conclusion that perhaps the usual apprehension of the individual as well as of his public or of his critics is that, once outside of danger, out of harm's way, one's instincts, one's pencil get duller. One's notion of evil becomes less sharp.

But, I think, on the contrary, in fact you find yourself really in

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a rather remarkable predicament vis-à-vis, let's say, the evil . . . well, vis-à-vis the dragon. That is, you can observe him, you can ascertain and assess him in a better fashion. You can see with greater clarity—precisely because of all the data available to you here which wasn't there—all his scales, all his spikes, all his teeth. On top of that, you are not mesmerized. Your attention is not clouded by the fear of being grabbed by that dragon at any time. So basically, if you are to take him on, you can find yourself as well armed as the dragon is. In fact, you establish a certain parity at this safe distance. And on top of that, you have always suspected that you are, perhaps, as bad as the dragon yourself, and given the chance you would be just as nasty and monstrous as he is. That is, you have always suspected there is more of a monster in you than of Saint George. It's not customary for a certain type of writer to regard himself as a fallen angel. One would rather regard oneself as a devil, as one of the devils.

And maybe the fact that I stayed, as you say, prolific reflects simply the availability of data. Maybe it reflects simply the realization that monstrosity is everywhere, while in Russia I thought of it as being our local specialty.

DM: It sounds as if you're implying an identification of the victim with the assailant.

JB: But of course. No, I would say simply your notion of the dragon becomes far more subtle. That is, you realize you may play Saint George *ad infinitum*, because the animal is everywhere. And in a sense, you become, your armor becomes, in the final analysis, your own scales. And clarifying these things on paper conspires to bring the subsequent charge of being prolific. Prose is a more natural medium for that sort of job, for pondering. And to answer your very first question, the thing that many fail to realize is that there is a great bond between a poem and essay writing. Both employ the technique invented, of course, in poetry by poetry, of montage. It's not Eisenstein, it's poetry. It's stanzas with those frame-like shapes.

DM: It's the parts trying to become the whole.

JB: Yes, exactly.

DM: In comparing two of your poems, "Elegy for John Donne," an early poem, and the more recent "Lullaby of Cape Cod," I was struck by how similar they are in many ways, but also how drastically different. Both are set at night, both are very solitary poems. The earlier poem seems to show a spiritual struggle. There's a definite battle going on. I think in the John Donne poem, you had the

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categories clearer: spirit, flesh, and so forth. And therefore the struggle was much more intense. But in the later poem, there's less certainty. There's a sense of exhaustion—maybe even a spiritual exhaustion. Instead of snow, there's the heat. You repeat the word "stifling." And also, there's the sheer weight of the material world. Despite the list of objects, in the earlier poem there's a sort of resurrection. In the later poem, everything seems to be drugged, heavy, as if it can't wake up. What do you think of this reading?

JB: There is some similarity, come to think of it. I never thought about it. I don't really know. Perhaps this is a valid comparison and a valid observation, and perhaps there is some sort of a genealogy of the kind that you're talking about. But I don't think so. I think the only thing it testifies to is, at best, not so much the evolution of the views as the consistency of the device.

I sort of like "Lullaby of Cape Cod." You should be aware of the fact that it's ninety-three lines longer in the translation than it is in the original. In the original, it's a bit more concise. And I think it's a far more lyrical work than "Big Elegy." In "Big Elegy" there is indeed a certain clarity of the spirit. It is a vertical job from the threshold. But "Cape Cod Lullaby" I was writing not as a poem with a beginning and end, but more as a lyrical sequence. It was more like playing piano than singing an aria. Actually I'd written that poem because it was the Bicentennial, you see, and I thought—well, why don't I do something? There is one image there, I think, where I use the Stars and Stripes.

DM: As you did with the word "stifling," you often use repetition and anaphora. It seems to me, your poetry is centrifugal. You start from a center and move outward, turning and separating different aspects of the subject. Whereas Akhmatova would be more centripetal.

JB: True, there is obviously a difference of temperaments. She seldom operates in big forms. She is a poet of great economy, and she's a more classical poet. Well, I wouldn't like to be compared to her.

DM: What gives you the least confidence now in poetry? Is there any particular problem that you're trying to solve?

JB: The poems are always particular when you are writing this or that one. I'm not trying to bill myself in any spectacular fashion, but I think as somebody who has always written in meter and rhyme, I do increase the purely technical stakes. Those two aspects, especially rhyme, simply are synonymous with compounding your own problems from the threshold, from the first impulse to write, which is

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fairly frequently a blissful one, in my case, or the sense of guilt. But I know what I'm going to do more or less from the moment I set out. That is, I more or less have the sense of form at the moment I'm starting with some sort of content, and the form gives you a great deal of headache.

DM: Like Auden, you have a fascination with form. Do you think structure itself sometimes leads you into new content?

JB: Presumably, because by and large it's very seldom that one knows at the outset where one is heading. Simply by virtue of being a citizen of a different era, you're *bound* to invest the ancient form, old form, compromised—if you will—form with a qualitatively new meaning. That creates contrast, it creates a tension, and the result is always new. It's bound to be new. And it's terribly interesting. Apart from anything else, sometimes you write about certain things precisely for the form's sake, in many ways. That's not to say that you're trying to write a *villanelle* and la-di-da to check whether your facility is still there. No, it's simply because, otherwise, to write about certain things wouldn't be as appetizing a prospect. After all, you can say only so many things, you can express only so many attitudes towards the reality of this world. In fact, all the attitudes in the final analysis are computable. And forms are not. Or at least the interplay of an attitude and the form in which it is expressed in writing increases the options.

DM: Some poets now don't use rhyme and meter, they claim, because they feel such form is no longer relevant to experience or experience doesn't have the continuity or structure that such form implies.

JB: They're entitled to their views, but I think it's pure garbage. Art basically is an operation within a certain contract, and you have to abide by all the clauses of the contract. You write poetry, to begin with, in order to influence minds, to influence hearts, to *move* hearts, to move people. In order to do so, you have to produce something which has an appearance of inevitability and which is memorable, so that it will stick in the mind of the reader. You have to wrap it in such a fashion that the reader won't be able to avoid it, so that what you have said will have a chance of entering his subconscious and of being remembered. Meter and rhyme are basically mnemonic devices. Not to mention the fact to which Ezra Pound alerted us, I think way back in 1911 or 1915, by saying there's too much free verse around. And that was in the teens of the century.

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DM: Or as Robert Frost said, free verse is like playing tennis without a net.
JB: Well, it's not tennis. And not cricket either.
DM: Are you getting together a new book of poems in English translation?
JB: That's somewhere on the horizon.
DM: Will it be by various translators, as was *A Part of Speech*?
JB: I would imagine so, because otherwise the book would be very slim.
DM: You're a translator yourself. You've done particularly difficult poets, John Donne, for example. Do you feel your work's been well translated into English?
JB: Sometimes it has, sometimes it hasn't. On the whole, I think I have less to complain about than any of my fellow Russians, dead or alive. Or poets in other languages. My luck, my fortune is that I've been able to sort of watch over the translations. And at times I would do them myself.
DM: Since Russian is an inflected language and phonetically very different from English, it must bother you that the sounds, the syntax, and the quality of the original can't be conveyed.
JB: Yes, but that's what makes translation intricate and interesting. Curlicue. Other people solve crossword puzzles; well, I have translations. Essentially the operation is like solving a crossword puzzle, except that the next day they don't print the answers. On the whole, though, the principles of assonance or consonance in English are not that drastically different from the Russian. A word is a word. A sound is a sound, after all.
DM: Are you translating anyone into Russian now?
JB: Not for the moment, no.
DM: If you object to the next questions, please tell me.
JB: Go ahead.
DM: I want to ask you about the trial.
JB: That was many moons ago. Nothing interesting about it.
DM: We can read the shorthand account of it, but what was it like from your point of view? It was a mock trial. It must have seemed absurd, though it was no joke. It must have made you angry.
JB: It didn't make me angry. In fact, it did not. Never. No, a joke it wasn't. It was dead serious. I can talk about that at length, but in short . . . how shall I put it? It simply was an enactment of what I knew all along. But it's nice when things are *enacted*, you know. I

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knew who the masters were, and I knew that I had no other choice, that one day sooner or later it was going to happen that I would be in that position. I didn't expect a worse position; I didn't expect a better position. It didn't surprise me in the least that it happened, and the only thing I was interested in was what kind of sentence I was going to get. It looked rather dreadful, because there were lots of people. It looked like what I've seen of a Nuremberg trial, in terms of the number of police in the room. It was absolutely studded with police and state security people.

It's funny how—looking back now with the benefit of hindsight—I didn't really pay very much attention to what was going on, because attention was exactly what the state would have liked you to display. Or feel, indeed. The state wants you to get . . . well, you don't allow yourself to get scared, and you just think about something else. You pretend it isn't happening. You simply sit there and, as much as you can, you try to ignore it. In fact, the only time I was moved during the whole thing was when two people stood up and defended me—two witnesses—and said something nice about me. I was so unprepared to hear something positive that I was a little bit moved. But other than that, no. So, I got my five years, and I walked out of the room and was taken to the prison, and that was it.

DM: You had already spent three weeks of interrogation in a hospital?

JB: It was more than that. It was the mental institution. But that wasn't for the first time. It wasn't the first arrest either. It was the third, I think. I'd been twice to mental institutions, three times to prisons. All that sort of thing. And since it wasn't terribly new or terribly fresh, I wasn't shocked then.

DM: Why did you feel that this would eventually happen?

JB: Because one way or another I knew that I was running my own show, that I was doing something which amounts essentially to private enterprise in what is otherwise a state-owned economy, so to speak. And I knew that one day I would be grabbed.

It's simply the different tonality, the different use of the language. In a society where everything belongs to the state, to try to speak with your own voice, etcetera, is obviously fraught with consequences. It's not so interesting. It's simply an idiotic situation, and you find yourself in the position of a victim, as a sort of martyr. Well, you find you're sort of ashamed of it. It's *embarrassing*.

DM: You said once that your months of forced labor near Archangel in 1964–65 were perhaps the most normal time in your life.

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JB: True, almost two years of it.
DM: In fact, the people there, you said, treated you well, like a son.
JB: Well, a son . . . that was a bit too much. As one of their own, yes.
DM: You mentioned at one point that they were pleased to have a poet among them.
JB: What they were pleased with, if they were, was simply another pair of hands, and also because I knew a little bit of medicine and could assist them. They were highly uneducated people, and the closest medical help was about twenty-five miles away. So, I was simply helping them as much as I could and they were just nice to me, not in exchange, but basically because they were normal people and had no axe to grind with me.
DM: And you continued to write and to study English?
JB: Yes.
DM: And translate?
JB: Well, as much as I could. I had to work in the field, etcetera, but there you get this normal life, a hired hand sort of thing. Perhaps a little bit more work sometimes, and you're not being paid. But essentially it was okay.
DM: In 1965 you were released and you remained in Russia until 1972. You did a lot of writing during that period also. Were you interfered with by the authorities?
JB: Not very much. They would interfere with publication, but with life as such, no. Several times there would be subpoenas for interrogations and this and that. . . .
DM: When you first came to the United States, what surprised you most? It's been said that you drew some of your expectations from reading Robert Frost, that you felt America would be more rural than you found it.
JB: Not more rural, but I thought that the people would be less vocal, less hysterical, more reserved, more prudent with their speech.
DM: Could we talk a minute about current politics?
JB: Be my guest.
DM: What do you think Gorbachev's effect will be in certain areas of the world, in Afghanistan, in Poland and just on United States-Soviet relations in general? Do you think he'll make drastic changes?
JB: When Gorbachev became General Secretary, Derek Walcott asked me what I thought of him. Well, frankly, I said, nothing, and I hope it's mutual. Since then, I haven't changed my opinion.

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DM: Let's go on to two other people probably more pleasing for you to talk about. You knew Auden and Akhmatova, and they seem to have been very important to you. Could you say something about Auden and also about Akhmatova, how they struck you or how they affected you?

JB: I can tell you how. They turned out to be people whom I found that I could love. Or, that is, if I have a capacity for loving, those two allowed me to exercise it, presumably to the fullest. To the extent that I think—oddly enough, not so much about Akhmatova but about Auden—sometimes that I am he. That shouldn't be reported, perhaps, because they would fire me everywhere.

Essentially, what you do love in a poet like Auden is not the verses. Obviously you remember, you memorize, you internalize the verse, but you internalize it and internalize it and internalize it until the point comes when he occupies in you more of a place perhaps than you yourself occupy. Auden, in my mind, in my heart, occupies far greater room than anything or anybody else on the earth. As simple as that. Dead or alive or whatever. It's a tremendously strange thing, or maybe I'm freaking out, or maybe I freaked out at a certain time, or maybe I've just gone mad. I simply think about him too often. In a sense, I can go as far as to say that, if I could supply an index to my daily mental operation, I think Auden and his lines would pop up more frequently there, would occupy more pages, so to speak, than anything else. And similarly Akhmatova, though to a lesser extent, oddly enough, I must confess. Well, I shouldn't pretend.

Both of them I think gave me, whatever was given me, almost the cue or the key for the voice, for the tonality, for the posture towards reality. In a sense, I think that their poems to a certain extent—some of Akhmatova's and quite a lot of Auden's—are written by me, or that I'm the owner. That is, it doesn't matter what I do in my attitude towards people, in my attitude towards what I'm writing. I know that I'm myself, that gender distinguishes me from both of them, I would say, in many ways. But I sort of live their lives. Not that I'm a postscript to either one of them. Both would rebel against that. But to myself it's more sensible or more pleasant perhaps to think that I'm a postscript to them than that I'm leading my own life. I happen to think of myself as somebody who loves Auden or loves Akhmatova more than myself. It's obviously an exaggeration, but it's an exaggeration I feel comfortable with sometimes. I know quite clearly one thing about both of them: that they were both better than

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I in all possible respects. And that's enough. You simply think about people who are better than you are, and you spend your life sort of—how shall I put it—thinking about everybody you bump into.
DM: In your poem "Nature Morte," is there an echo—maybe it's because of the shortness of the lines—of "September 1, 1939"?
JB: No, no. That's not true. I know what makes you feel that way. It's the opening of "Nature Morte." Well, there is that. There are other poems perhaps which have strong echoes of Wystan's, but I think at that time I was more under the influence of MacNeice than of Auden. That poem is an old one.
DM: You've stressed several times in your writing how language outlives the state. But, in our precarious age, the life of the state may in fact be the life of the language.
JB: No, not at all. No.
DM: What I'm getting at is the nuclear threat.
JB: Yes, I know.
DM: A sense of the continuity of language is so important, not to mention confidence in the future, which may seem very fragile or even nonexistent to some. Does this have an effect?
JB: No, I don't think that the future's fragile or nonexistent. I think we are in very good shape. That is, I don't think nuclear disaster is to occur. The greater the proliferation of all that nonsense, the safer we are, if only because the machines will try to control one another and the sense of command, the sense of responsibility is going to be far more diffused. Today it already takes two to launch a missile. So, eventually it will require three, four.
DM: Nobody can do it.
JB: Yes, nobody can do it and so forth. It's of course a little bit silly, but something along those lines sort of instills hope in you. But should the worst come, should the worst happen, I don't think that will automatically mean the end of the language. In the first place, I think whatever the destruction inflicted by the states upon one another, something will survive. And language obviously will survive because the funny thing about language is that it knows better than anything or anyone what it means to mutate. The language's ability to mutate is terrific. It's a bit like roaches.
DM: A last question. Absolutes are something you deal with a lot in your prose. What absolutes would you say we have to live by if our sense of good and evil is somewhat oversophisticated perhaps, or sophisticated to the point of paralyzing us? What other types of absolutes are there, if any, or do we need them?

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JB: Well, there is one. It's kind of a funny thing to be asked. And it puts me immediately in a position where I am tempted to proselytize, to a certain extent. But, first of all, one shouldn't really allow oneself into that situation where one's sense of good and evil gets so, as you say, sophisticated. Basically there is one criterion which nobody with sophistication would refuse: that you should treat your own kind the way you would like to be treated yourself. It's a tremendous idea offered to us by Christianity, in a sense. It's a terribly selfish idea, and it finally established the bond.

DM: It turned the urge toward self-preservation into a social value.

JB: But of course. Frost said once, to be social is to be forgiving. And that's basically the requirement, to forgive because you would like to be forgiven yourself, not only by the Almighty, but by your fellow beings. And I thought the other day—well, I looked—now it's going to be a little bit maudlin, but then in effect I prove my profession—out of the window and I saw a star. Then I thought, that star over there, presumably, with some help, is the domain of the Almighty, all the stars, etcetera. Then it occurred to me that this thought about loving your neighbor as yourself travelled here from quite afar. I thought, how appropriate is the origin. That is, the stars being the origin of this idea. For a star to like its neighbor, it takes something, yes? It's kind of interesting to think about, to think it through. I don't really know. . . . I don't think any magazines will want this interview.

DM: Do you think they won't swallow it?

JB: No, it's not that they won't swallow it. They'll probably find it too lyrical.

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THEATER

Peter Handke

ABOUT THE VILLAGES

HANS

Here, you see this gentleman, my brother. In the first year of my life he left the gate inside the house, put there specifically for me, unlocked and I tumbled downstairs and smacked my head on the cement floor, so that I, as one used to say, was fit to be nothing but a worker. Sent to do errands, he took me and my sister along, then sat down at some wayside and read and read, and we others, who didn't know our way home alone yet, stood around him and sobbed, wailed and hollered, not that he let this bother him in his reading even once. When he was supposed to help us with our lessons later on, he stood there and beat us on our heads, and when the tears dripped on the ink he tore the sheets out of our notebooks, one after the other. And by that time no one dared punish him for that. The entire household, the whole neighborhood was frightened of him because he was the way he was. He forced us into the woods to pick berries and refused to understand that we others did not have his pride in filling jars: mute, we stood in the moss and bushes and let him curse us as lazy bones. At that time I swore revenge for every curse and beating. I only rarely felt that he liked us. Not until he was far away did he become good to us. He not only greeted in his letters, he also partook. Quite late it dawned on me: he wanted us to be like him. He was alone and took himself as the measure. But we are not he. I am a worker. I was, I can say, born as a worker. I don't want to be like him. I am not keen to eat what he eats, to drink what he drinks. I am often asked whether I envy him, and my reply is that I am satisfied to be a worker. And yet you can trust him. He's not some panhandler with a tape recorder who steals your life's story and your secret. Perhaps he listens to you differently. And he belongs to us and scratches himself on the same spots. [They all step forward.

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Hans introduces them.] We are all from the same valley. This here is Anton. He lives at the valley-end and early Monday morning he loads us one after the other into his car. When you drive through the empty villages at dawn, long before the first scheduled bus, and see single men stand by the roadside with a dufflebag or a thick briefcase, a thermos sticking out, all bundled up and bearish, then that is us. Anton is just building a house. On weekends I go over to help him. The water has been diverted; the cellar already excavated. In one year the shell will perhaps be done, yet one more year, perhaps a room on the ground floor: from there he will gradually enlarge. Anton was a long time overseas. Look at him: he is as old as you and has almost no teeth left. "We like you the way you are," that's what our wives keep saying obediently to us—but naturally they would prefer us different; as we would them; with o-yes!—breasts and no varicose veins. Aren't our names for each other as though we addressed each others' parents? "Dad," says my wife to me, "Ma," I say to my wife. And has time really passed since one night two were wild and hot and magma fluid-like, the empty field around us a main dance floor filled by us alone, the sky above warm breathing skin body within, the world as small as wind tinge and we inside a secret! Aren't we all still young? Anton slaved for years overseas, high in the Arctic, laying pipeline, but didn't he just now sit in the first grade with you? Here [he points] the frozen-off ear—a teacher threatened to tear if off only a short while ago. Here [he points] the squashed-off finger tips—a moment ago still your pointman's hand during your First Holy Communion procession—a moment ago still too pudgy-fingered for the fat votive candle, a moment ago still drip-wet with holy water! And here [he points upstairs] the rumbling of the cement mixers, day after day, and yet no more pertinent than the Easter bonfire crackling twenty years ago; the daily clouds of steaming tar in the nose, and at the same time still stuck to the inside of your hands the far more pungent odor of green apples prematurely stolen from strangers' orchards; the screaming and hollering of the foremen and engineers here on the scaffolding: how easily drowned out by the gentle sound of a domestic animal from that period which even now, beyond punch-in-time, rises from its place or lies down to rest. And if that isn't a so-called recollection! We are still young!—This here is Ignatius [he points him out]. He, too, worked a long time overseas, in the jungle, vicinity equator. He's from our neighboring village and lives there again now. He lives by himself, without a family. When you pass through his village in its center you

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suddenly find yourself standing smack in front of a castle, its battlements and ramparts still unplastered, walls of precast concrete blocks: over there, the owner, architect and master builder. He has almost no time to work on it except in the winter when we are laid off, and he can't wait to retire so that he can then complete the building. Ignatius [he points] wears a truss; when dragging cement blocks his gut often sticks out. At night he is feverish and imitates the jungle cries in his sleep. His castle stands next to a small farmhouse and is scarcely larger; behind it lies a cabbage and beet patch, and on it a shed with a straw sack, a bench and sawdust oven. That fellow you see before you, soft-kneed from a day in mud and grit, snot-sniveling, coughing phlegm, is admired in his village. At the inn, they've mounted a piggy bank by the card table wall for him and his building: that's where people put small change, which really adds up in a month! The castle looks odd: it tapers off sharply towards the top and on a full moon belongs to the high pyramid mountain in back, as its small clone in the village region. And he built his castle solely for his image; otherwise there's nothing doing with him. In the barracks [he points], however, he pins up new naked girls on the bed wall every Monday, and in the canteen he is the first to sit down for lunch and the last to leave, and in the evening after the TV is off and lights out when a big chug-a-lug speaks somewhere in the dark here [he points], that then is certainly the castle lord, saint and man from overseas, drinking his cactus brew and saying with that: "Construction site, valley, land, earth below, listen, it's me." But let us toast the tellers of tall tales even if they only act as if: because today is our last evening here. Let's toast the savages even if they are only ghosts: because tomorrow we'll be sitting home in our kitchen winding alarm clocks faithfully again. [He takes Ignatius and turns around with him once.] Great spirit of the universe come down upon us once today, unfold thyself in the wide space of air, let us hover a touch above the floor and lift-leap as a parachute tip the inside of our chest. Other existence, unfold to us time and again and not too rarely above rigid antennas, behind the wavering tree tops, amidst the greening underbrush down in the glass bottoms of the eyes of passersby, between the cracks of clouds moving high above, your magnificently colored face. Leave us not alone with the artifice vibrations of our short-lived machines—or else the pomposity of the electrical will soon envelop the whole earthly realm in darkness. Do not remove our good dear lasting things into the dream but show them to us in daylight, put them in sunlight at our heads, as far as

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near, and set us free sometimes for the tree "tree," the river "river," the soothingly green plain, the shimmering mountain back, saddle of gods, the cloud as the early morning airplane, the flower as the refuge cup. Let us this evening be who we are—human beings of a primordial time, and use the tongues inside our mouths to bend the moon behind the boughs, the snailhouse in the mud and iron rods in the cement into one unity. Land, lower your flag at a coat of arms. Valleys all, strike your hymns, forget your names. Ways here, shelter yourselves in namelessness. [He walks up and down the stage.] Construction site, here, you too, as in the old saying, animate yourself into nameless simplicity. That this place [he points] have no name this evening. That it be called "wilderness" and that there be no one here but us. We too are nameless. [To everyone in the circle.] Answer as a.k.a. unknown. Show no one your homeland. Forget the judgement and ignore the trial. Don't look to the people—nothing can be seen there anymore. Move without music—music leads in the wrong direction. Only the most delicate rustling accords with the human ear. [They listen.] The names fall away. We are in the free. Now we can call this place "earth" again.—That fellow is normally called Albin. His home is a cellar and the bigshots here think he's retarded and let him only work provisionally month by month. At the inn the waitress once sat down next to him, and [to Gregor] you should have seen him clutch her hand. What a caress that was! He did not just cry just laugh, he hollered loud and sobbed. And in-between he tugged her apron string with a big grin. And here, back at the barracks, he kept saying: "She sat down next to me so sweetly." Of course, Albin is no idiot. He only plays dumb for those he doesn't know: and mostly he don't want to know no one. He lives in his cellar because he decided to. He extended it for a war. It is his bunker, and it's also there for us. Perhaps we'll thank him for it soon. I've been down there a lot, also overnight. He's got a ham radio in one corner, it rustles, whirrs and pops—and sometimes voices come from across the sea, from island to island. A bird: the dawn. Morning red a flock of doves. The cellar is a real warren and holds more than tinned goods. Each wall has one nook for stones and fossils, and each nook stands for one construction site, and each find is inscribed—with names that bear no semblance to the norm. Otherwise, you know Albin as the fellow who bellows in empty train stations at night. He's the guy with the switchblade, the smart ass with the claxon by the bar who hurls his mug against the mirror, then plunges headfirst into the next beer-belly. He's the grinning

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killer with the badge of skull and bones. At public demonstrations he's the officer in uniform who wishes every civilian for an enemy. In the midst of peace he lets peanut shells crackle as though he volunteered for the firing squad. Albin has served time. He knows the emergency exit in each room. He sits in the porno houses and stinks. He plants himself right next to you in the otherwise empty bus and whistles through his stump teeth the entire trip. At night he mucks around the swamp and emits death yells. He takes a cart shopping for his crippled mother. His gravestone says: "Vanished." He is also a woman: you touch him and he squeals: "No tickling." At soccer games he stands in the goal as the specialist for high shots but misses everything that comes in low. At wakes he is the only one who stays with the mourners all night long. In forests he steps from the crack in the hollow tree trunk. He stands in the old wagon trail tracks with his divining rod while his dog slobbers stickily all over your Sunday best. He is the one who crawls into the underbrush, a dynamite stick between his teeth. He is black and blue. The sacred bull sits on his tongue and makes him speechless. He lays with you under one heart and appears to you as a face in the clouds. His last photo is black and white and oval, and his mangled bicycle lies by the milestone in the grass. His sign is the atrophied thigh muscle [he points] from lying in hospitals too long, and here [he points] a stiff knee courtesy of malpractice—the doctors, they don't stick to us. Who is he? He is a riddle. [To Gregor.] And woe to you say who he is. And woe to you who dare decide who we are! A signifying word—the feast is over. The festivities are to find the riddle. Perhaps we are the exploited, the downtrodden and insulted, the salt of the earth. But we, too, often get up at night. We like to piss into the soft cement. Every so often we see the stars circling in the corners of our eyes. We shout to the waitress: "Come here or I'll bite." We brew our soups from bouillon cubes on hot plates. At night we put on Medicaid glasses and peruse Holy Scriptures. We kiss past the faces of unwilling unfamiliar women. We put on our ties as best men at weddings. We fall from the scaffolding and break both heels. We get danger, hardship and distance bonuses, and slaughter a pig for winter. We are godfathers for each other's children and are each other's pallbearers. But we are not friends. We sleep, each by himself, face to the wallboard, and sense behind it all night long the colleague's breathing facing the wallboard, as we do on the other side. Early, with the first ring of the alarm without "Good morning" we switch on light and radio, smoke our first cigarette in our shorts,

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scratch the frostflowers off the window, curse the north wind, frozen ground and snow and all drink instant brew. By midweek we become restless and try to masturbate, but the wind is too cold out here. In the afternoons, the longest stretch of the work day, we think of our only friend who had an accident or is away abroad, wish our colleagues to death, become more inattentive with every grip, and then die ourselves perhaps. At home we have become too stupid for our children, at our arrival can't stand their voices or the way they move, send them too early to bed, then kneel down on the kitchen floor before our women, lean our heads against them, and tell of our infinitely unresolvable hostility to all authority and of the endless loneliness, cry our hearts out and disappear into the tavern. We've got to take it just a few more years, we keep saying to each other every day, a few decades. A few more tumblings of the earth are still ahead of us till we can walk from house to tree from tree to path, from path to village, and from the village back to the house with no one putting us on notice. We have to show a few more limbs mutilated by accidents or illness before the word "deadbeat" isn't used against us any more. A few more years, a few more decades. But even if we are not friends, we, too, are in a state of waiting and we continue to assert ourselves as riddles, and none of you opinion and behavior mongers see us. We are the figures walking in the distance through the fields, the silhouettes in the cross-country bus which drives through the snow-plain. Our shadowy faces fill the first to the last subway car and only in the curves do our eyes briefly lose touch. Sometimes we can address the distant mountains, and sometimes even be there on the horizon in the blue between two mountain ranges—as the gulch there, and the walls of rock. Once a day perhaps we wink hello down in the grass and are the sunlamp in the thicket, the net of light in the copper beach as well as the protective darkness inside the yew wood bush. Again and again we can be the root wind that suddenly lifts tree crowns from below, the soughing of night and day, the unending green, the calm gleaming ocean surface which the proverb calls "Galena." Tomorrow maybe we'll be nothing. Day after tomorrow we'll be interred and not even be a footnote in the history books. But the white cloud graves high above will always be our shrines. We are the fatherless, who have been set free, lack a legitimate homeland, are bracketed out of our places, the beautiful strangers, the great unknowns, the soulfully slow, the people of all time. Thus we use the power of the riddle. This evening, let us embody the craft that we have actually learned and whose mem-

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bers once were even called "the people": "The Carpenter People." Let's leave announcers and procurers out of the play here—do not the people form of themselves? Let it be right today that all our bosses, unlike us, live near enough and can go home each evening from here. Let them push lawnmowers up and down in front of houses with presumptuous arcades as they pushed them up and down already yesterday. Behold how this very moment they are wiping mud with rubber gloves off rubber tires outside while at the same time in the house the rubber-gloved wife is washing mud off rubber boots . . . . Rub-a-dub-dub. Behold our gentleman, the architect, just now ascending from the cellar, cradling the bottle in his arms, and show the visiting gentleman, his counsel, the vintage label, while Mistress Architect in the next room puts it to Mistress Counsel how she has flushed out a new butcher or a new baker, of whom the former lards venison ready-to-roast and the latter's beribboned tarts unfatten the fattest fatbag. Rub-a-dub-dub. And behold their children sitting next to them with lowered eyes, the darlings who have everything and love nothing, know everything and take nothing seriously, who as of the day they're born can see, hear, touch and read the beautiful and cannot believe, admire or respect any of it at all, and later in life tell the novel or drama of their oh so unhappy childhood, and bemoaning lovelessness pass lovelessness on, evilly eternalizing it. Rub-a-dub-dub. Behold the noble couple after watching television or an evening at the theater still put on a record to let the slavish music warble its lickspittle pipedream of the humanly possible or even great deeds they might do but none of which they will ever, ever, ever really get to except to let the dulcet lackeys blow them as the "as-if-aria" into their ears over and over again till kingdom come. Rub-a-dub-dub. Then behold master and mistress walk upstairs like funeral guests who lack both coffin and grief, and now behold the ladies and gentlemen embrace each other, as they did yesterday already and the day before, without missing each other, without tears in their eyes, without being moved, without passions. Behold how they lie on top of each other without releasing each other. Behold how they reach their objective without ever having gotten there. Behold how untroubled their sleep at the thought that just now it was again forever goodbye. Rub-a-dub-dub. Yes, they have been recognized. Today the mighty are the disenchanted. Haven't they lacked all secrets for ages? They are running with the pack, yet no river runs with them. They believe that they are walking, yet no cloud goes with them. They play and play, yet

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no game makes them children again. They are celebrating with us but none of us celebrates anything in common with them. Only we wounded hear the beauty and see the vastness. They are unriddled and resoundingly dead. As the saying attests: "Evil will soon invent its machine"—thus, they are the machines of evil. This evening here is a different feast! (He shouts into the barracks.) Hey, Site Mother, no background music tonight, no artificially amplified voices, no flicker tube to distort our clear night. Come: we are celebrating the hour of hands as free as gods. Tear yourself from your crossword puzzle. Pour sour booze down the drain. Turn the calendar to the wall. Switch off the TV for once and roll away from the false images. Step out of the drinking-waterless cloud and keep the sterile waves away from your body. Push down the antennas and spread the crocheted white cloth with the inscription "No more blue light in our living rooms" on the pallid shrine of death. Hey, Mother Construction Site. Stop the loose tongues. Let's have radio silence. Push through the echoless soundbarrier, leap from the deafmute blindness to the moon and soar towards us into the playready, refreshing hereness which sets everything aright. (All noises have slowly ceased in the barracks. Even though it was never more than a background sound, the quiet has now become more distinct. We hear the rustling of earth and sky.)

Hey, Mother Construction Site. As there is light, look at yourself. Look for your eyes. A field, a star. Radiant not melancholy transform your forehead into the diadem, wrap your lace shawl around your shoulders, let your thigh tremble anew, step from the building and scream the first scream.

Translated from the German by Michael Roloff

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FICTION

Witold Gombrowicz

THE BANQUET

A meeting of the Council . . . a secret meeting of the Council. . . was taking place in the dark and historic portrait hall, which, with its primeval might and vastness, exceeded and even overwhelmed the might of the Council. From the ancient walls the remote portraits gazed deafly and dumbly at the sacerdotal faces of the dignitaries, who, in turn, were gazing at the dry ancient figure of the great Chancellor and Minister of State. Delivering his speech dryly as he was wont to do, the dry and mighty old man did not conceal his deep joy, and he called upon the attendant ministers and undersecretaries of state to commemorate this historic moment by rising. For, as a result of many years' effort, the union of the King with the Archduchess Renata Adelaida Christina was coming to pass; for, Renata Adelaida had arrived at the royal court; for, on the very next day at the court banquet the betrothed (who had heretofore known each other only from their portraits) would be presented to each other—and this union of all measures excellent would enhance and infinitely increase the authority as well as the power of the Crown. The Crown! The Crown! The Crown! Still, an intense uneasiness, a keen worry, even anxiety, furrowed the worldly-wise, experienced faces of the ministers and undersecretaries of state, and something unspoken, something dramatic lurked behind their withered and venerable lips.

At the unanimous proposal of the Council, the Chancellor opened the floor for discussion . . . yet silence, deaf and dumb silence, seemed to be the primary feature of the discussion that ensued. The Minister of Internal Affairs first asked for the floor, but when he was given it, he fell silent and was silent for the whole time of his speech—after which he sat down. Then the Minister of the Court took the floor, but once he had risen he also was silent about all that he had to say, after which he sat down. In the further succession of speeches, whichever minister took the floor stood up and was silent, after which he sat down, and the silence, the obstinate silence of the Council, multiplied by the silence of the portraits as well as the

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silence of the walls, grew more and more powerful. The candles flickered. The Chancellor steadfastly presided over the silence. The hours passed.

What was the reason for the silence? None of the men could admit or even think the thought that, on the one hand, was unavoidable and occurred to everyone with irresistible power and, on the other hand, had become nothing less than a crime of lèse-majesté. Therefore they were silent. How could one admit, how could one say that the King . . . that the King was . . . oh, no, never, never ever, it would be better to die first . . . that the King . . . oh no, ah, no, oh no . . . that the King was corrupt! The King was a swindler! The King was selling himself! In his audacious, sordid, insatiable greed, the King was as corrupt a traitor as history had ever known. The King was a bribe-taker and a traitor! The King was selling his own majesty for nickels and dimes!

Suddenly the heavily carved portals of the hall opened and King Gnulo appeared in the uniform of a general of the Guard, with a sword at his side and in a large cocked hat. The ministers bowed low to the ruler, who, watching them slyly with his piercing eyes, threw his sword on the table and himself in an armchair and crossed his legs.

By the power of the King's presence, the Council of Ministers was transformed into a Royal Council, and the Royal Council proceeded to hear out the King's declaration. In his declaration, the King above all professed his joy that his wedding with the Archduchess was coming to pass and he expressed his unshakeable faith and hope that his Royal Person would succeed in attaining the love of this daughter of kings. Nevertheless, he emphasized the burden of responsibility weighing on his shoulders. And there was something so excessively corrupt in the voice of the King that the Council shuddered in its absolute silence.

"We cannot conceal," the King pronounced, "that participation in tomorrow's banquet means hard work for us. . . . After all, we will have to exert ourselves a great deal so that the Archduchess will bring back an advantageous impression. . . . Nonetheless we are prepared to do anything for the good of the Crown, especially if . . . if . . . hm . . . hm. . . . "

The royal fingers drummed significantly on the table, and his declaration became increasingly more confidential. There could no longer be any doubt. Nothing less than that this bribe-taker in a crown was demanding a bribe for his participation in the banquet.

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And suddenly the King began to complain that these were hard times, that it wasn't clear how he was going to make ends meet . . . after which he began to giggle . . . began to giggle and wink unceremoniously at the Chancellor, the Secretary of State. . . . He winked and began to giggle again. . . . He giggled and tapped him in the ribs with his finger.

In deepest and what would seem to be a concentrated silence, the old man looked at the monarch who was giggling, winking and poking him in the ribs . . . and the silence of the old man resounded with the silence of the portraits and the silence of the walls. The King's giggling died away. . . . Then the iron old man bowed to the King and in his wake the heads of the ministers bowed and the knees of the undersecretaries of state bent. The might of the Council's bow, made unexpectedly in this secluded hall, was terrible. The bow struck the King in his very breast, stiffened his hands and feet, and restored his grandeur to him—so that poor Gnulo groaned horribly within these walls and attempted once more to giggle . . . but the giggle died on his lips. . . . In the quiet of this unyielding silence, the King became frightened . . . and he was afraid for some time . . . until at last he started to retreat before the Council and himself, and his back, clad in a general's uniform, disappeared into the darkness of the corridor.

Then a monstrous and venal cry: "I'll pay you for this! I'll pay you, I'll pay you!" reached the ears of the Council.

Promptly after the King's departure, the Chancellor again opened up the discussion and again the Council's contribution was silence. Steadfastly the Chancellor presided over the silence. The ministers stood up and sat down. The hours passed. How could one ensure that the King, enraged at the refusal of a bribe, would not stoop to some other scandal at the banquet; how could one protect the King from Gnulo; and finally, even if one managed by some miracle to avoid a scandal, what kind of impression would this hapless, shameful, and embarrassing King create on the foreign Archduchess and daughter of emperors—these were the questions that the Council refused to consider, that it threw out, that it spewed out in silent convulsions within these walls. The ministers stood up and sat down. However, when at four o'clock in the morning the Council unanimously tendered its resignation, the helmsman of the ship of state did not accept it and instead uttered these significant words:

"Gentlemen, we must force the King to be King, we must im-

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prison the King in the King, we must shut up the King in the King. . . . "

Indeed, only the terrorizing of the King through the pressure of splendor, history, brilliance, and ceremony multiplied to extremes could still save the Crown from being compromised. The Chancellor made a recommendation in the same vein and thus the banquet that took place the next day in the Hall of Mirrors glittered with all possible splendors—from splendor it passed into splendor, from brilliance into brilliance, from glory into glory, as if it were tolling bells hung in the highest and seemingly unearthly circles and regions of brilliance.

The Archduchess Renata, escorted into the hall by the great Master of Ceremonies and the Marshall of the Court, squinted her eyes, awed by the stately and ageless luminescence of this archbanquet. With discreet power, the ancient historic families moved past into the sacerdotal radiance of the clergy, which itself moved past as if intoxicated into the whiteness of worthy and withering décolletages, and these wanly drowned in the epaulettes of generals and the sashes of ambassadors—and the mirrors repeated this splendor on into infinity. The murmur of conversations sank into the smell of perfumes. When King Gnulo entered the hall and blinked, blinded by its radiance, a loud cry of salutation immediately caught him up as if in a pair of pincers, and the bow of those gathered there did not allow him to escape his cry . . . and the aisle created by this bow forced him to advance towards the Archduchess, who, tearing the lace of her garment to shreds, did not want to believe her eyes. Was the King and her future spouse this vulgar shopkeeper with the mug of a simple clerk and the shrewd look of a petty-minded fruit vendor and a small-time blackmailer? But—oh wonder—was this shopkeeper the magnificant King who neared her along an aisle of bowed subjects? When the King took her by the hand, she trembled with disgust, but at the same moment the thunder of cannon and the ringing of bells drew a sigh of rapture from her breast. The Chancellor gave a sigh of relief, which was increased and multiplied by the sigh of the Council.

Resting his royal, holy, and metaphysical hand on the head of his sword, the King gave his other hand, omnipotent and sanctifying, to the Archduchess Renata and led her to the banquet table. The guests led their ladies after him with a rustling of feet and a shimmering of epaulettes and aigrettes.

But what was that? Did some quiet, trifling, tiny, hardly audi-

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ble yet treacherous sound reach the ear of the Chancellor and the ear of the Council? Did their ears deceive them or did they hear a sound as if someone to the side . . . as if someone to the side . . . jingled . . . jingled coins . . . jangled coppers in his pocket? What was it? The severe, cold look of the historic elder moved through those present and in the end halted upon the figure of one of the ambassadors. Not a single muscle twitched on the ambassador's face; with a barely perceptible expression of irony on his thin lips, this representative of an enemy power led Princess Bizancia, the daughter of the Marquise Friulo, to the table. . . . Yet once more they heard the traitorous, quiet, and extremely dangerous sound . . . and the apprehension of betrayal, insignificant base betrayal, the apprehension of a lurking secret conspiracy crept into the dramatic and historic soul of the great minister. Was it—a conspiracy? Was it—treason?

The second fanfare of trumpets heralded the beginning of the feast. In response to their overpowering order, Gnulo placed his vulgar posterior on the very edge of the royal chair. When he had barely managed to sit down, the entire gathering sat down after him. Ministers, generals, clergy, and court sat down, sat down, sat down. The King moved his hand toward his fork, picked it up, raised a piece of roast meat to his lips and in the same moment the government, court, staff of generals, and clergy lifted up pieces of meat to their lips, and the mirrors repeated this act on into infinity. Gnulo, in terror, stopped eating—but then the entire gathering stopped eating, and the act of not eating became even more powerful than the act of eating. . . . Gnulo then, in order to interrupt this noneating as quickly as possible, raised his goblet to his face—and immediately everyone raised their goblets in a loud toast repeated a thousand times, a toast that exploded and hung in the air . . . so that Gnulo put down the goblet as quickly as he could. Yet then they put down their goblets. The King therefore sipped again from his goblet. Once more a toast exploded. Gnulo put down the goblet, but seeing that everyone put down their goblets, lifted his goblet again—and again the gathering, raising their goblets, magnified the King's swallowing to the rafters in the roar of trumpets, the radiance of chandeliers, in the repetition of ancient mirrors. The frightened King swallowed again.

That traitorous sound—a quiet, barely perceptible jingling, the characteristic sound of change in one's pocket—again reached the ears of the Chancellor and the Council. The worthy old man once

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more fixed an attentive and dead stare on the enemy ambassador's conventional face . . . and again, more distinctly, the traitorous sound was heard. By now it had become obvious that someone who would stand to gain from compromising the King and the banquet wanted to tempt the pathological greediness of the monarch in this subversive way. The traitorous jingling resounded yet again and so distinctly that Gnulo heard it—and the serpent of covetousness crawled out onto this vulgar junkseller's face.

Disgrace! Disgrace! A threat! The soul of the King was so fanatic in its baseness, so trivially narrow, that he did not covet larger sums but actually paltry, small sums were enough to lure him to the bottom of hell. Oh, the real horror of this matter lay in the fact that not even bribes tempted the King to the same extent that tips did—tips were for him what a juicy bone is for a dog! The entire hall froze in mute anticipation. Having heard such a sweet and familiar sound, King Gnulo set down his goblet and forgetting the world in his boundless stupidity . . . imperceptibly licked his lips. . . . Imperceptibly! So it seemed to him. The King's licking of his lips exploded like a bomb in the presence of the entire banquet, which had reddened with shame.

Archduchess Renata Adelaida uttered a muffled cry of disgust! The eyes of the government, the court, the staff of generals, and the clergy turned to the person of the old man, who for many years guided the helm of state with his toil-worn hands. What should they do? How should they proceed?

And then they saw how a narrow aged tongue stuck out heroically, slowly, from the pale lips of the historic man. The Chancellor licked his lips! The Chancellor of State licked his lips!

For a moment more the Council fought with its dumbfoundedness, but in the end the tongues of the ministers, and in their wake, the tongues of the bishops . . . the tongues of the countesses and margravines stuck out and everyone from one end of the table to the other licked their lips in the mysterious shining of crystal, and the mirrors infinitely repeated this act, plunging it into their mirror perspectives.

At that point the King, enraged, seeing that he could allow himself nothing since everyone imitated him, violently pushed himself away from the table and stood up. But the Chancellor also stood up. And after him everyone stood up.

Now the Chancellor did not hesitate; he had already made a decision and its extreme daring defied all conventions! Realizing

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that he could no longer manage to conceal the true nature of the King from Renata, the Chancellor determined to openly transform the banquet into a struggle for the dignity of the Crown. Yes, there was no other way out—with complete ruthlessness, the banquet was to repeat not only the actions of the King that were fit to be repeated, but especially and above all those that were not fit to be repeated—only in this way could they remake his deeds into archdeeds—and such violence to the person of the King became necessary and unavoidable. Therefore, when the crazed Gnulo thumped the table with his fist, breaking two dishes, the Chancellor without a moment's hesitation broke two dishes and everyone broke two dishes at a time, as if in the Lord's honor, and the trumpets roared! The banquet was victorious over the King! The maddened King sat down and remained seated, timid as a mouse, but the banquet only lay in wait for his slightest movement. Something extreme, something fantastic—was appearing and disappearing in the vapors of the abandoned feast.

The King jumped up from his place at the head of the table! The banquet jumped up as well! The King stepped forward several paces. The banqueters also. The King began to circle the hall aimlessly. The banqueters also began to circle. And this circling, in its monotonous and infinite circling, attained such dizzy heights of archcircling that Gnulo, seized by a sudden feeling of dizziness, yelled—and with blood-filled eyes threw himself on the Archduchess—and, not knowing what to do, proceeded to gradually strangle her in front of the entire court!

Without a moment's hesitation, the helmsman of the ship of state threw himself on the first lady at hand and strangled her—and the remaining guests followed his example—while this archstrangling, repeated by a host of mirrors, gasped out of its infiniteness and grew, and grew, and grew—until the ladies' last wheezing gasp was stifled. . . . So then the banquet snapped its last ties to the normal world and took the reins into its own hands!

The Archduchess sank down onto the floor—dead. The strangled ladies sank down. And motionlessness, hideous motionlessness, speechless, augmented by the mirrors, began to grow and grow. . . .

And grew. Grew without stop. And increased, increased in oceans of silence, in the vastness of silence and reigned, archmotionlessness itself, and descended, took control and ruled . . . and its rule was absolute.

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At that point the King beat a hasty retreat.

Waving his hands, with a gesture of greatest panic, Gnulo turned tail and without further ado made his exit. . . . He ran to the doors, so as to be further away from this Archkingdom. The guests saw that the King was escaping them . . . a minute more and the King will escape! And they looked on in stupefaction, insofar as one could not restrain a King. . . . Who would dare to restrain a King by force?

"After him," bellowed the elder. "After him!"

A cold night wind fanned the cheeks of the dignitaries when they came out onto the square before the palace. The King was fleeing down the middle of the street, and at a distance of a dozen or so paces the Chancellor rushed after, the banquet and the ball rushed after. And here the archgenius of this archstatesman again manifested itself in all its archstrength—for THE DISGRACEFUL FLIGHT OF THE KING BECAME SOME KIND OF ATTACK and it was not known if THE KING WAS FLEEING or if also THE KING WAS RUSHING FORWARD AT THE HEAD OF THE BANQUET! Oh, the rushing and frenziedly rustling sashes and decorations of ambassadors, the purple raiments of the bishops, the frocks of the ministers and the ball dresses, oh, the gallop, the archgallop of so many potentates! The eyes of the populace had never seen anything like it. Magnates, possessors of immense land holdings, the descendants of the greatest families galloped alongside officers of the general staff, whose gallop escorted the gallop of all-powerful ministers, the stampede of marshalls, chamberlains, the gallop of stampeded famous ladies of court! Oh, the stampede, the archstampede of the marshalls, the chamberlains, the stampede of the ministers, the gallop of the ambassadors into the darkness of night, into the lantern light, under the vault of the heavens! The cannons resounded in the palace. And the King charged!

"Forward!" he cried. "Forward!"

And archcharging at the head of his archtroops, the archking thundered into the darkness of night!

Translated from the Polish by Beth Holmgren

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Jacek Trznadel

AN INTERVIEW WITH ZBIGNIEW HERBERT

JT: We are talking on the 9th of July, 1985.
ZH: Anno Domini. The conversation is about a period I do not like to talk of. I do not like to remember it. I am in a rather difficult situation. I was not a participant in this enslavement of literature during the Stalinist period.
JT: But this may give us a special perspective.
ZH: Perhaps. Can only the plague-stricken talk about plague? Although I certainly won't be able to avoid it, I would like to exclude the element of pride and self-elevation. It was a rather repulsive chapter in the postwar history of our literature. I am a specialist neither in the history of pornography nor the history of political gangsterism, and all this smacks exactly of pornography and political racket. People in Poland at that time could be divided into two categories: those from the left and the right bank. Those who lived through the Soviet occupation of 1939–1941 in Lvov or Vilno had some idea of the Soviet system. They witnessed its demonstration *in nuce*. Such people, like me, did not consider 1945 a "liberation" of any kind, but an invasion—a new occupation which was both longer and morally more difficult to survive. The Lvov experience was a lesson that left virtually no doubts about the color of the regime and its intentions. For me it was a brand of fascism. A terrible word, but I can prove it—fascist in its method. It is true that communism had its saints, while fascism had none, and that there was a certain qualitative difference. But the method was the same.
JT: I quite agree with this definition, especially when we speak of the essentials. The term "totalitarianism," although still evoking protests from the authorities when used directly to describe the present regime, begins to be tolerated by censorship in indirect and peripheral analyses.
ZH: Perhaps for a Frenchman "totalitarianism" still means something. Here, in Poland, it is going out of use. So I was a Pole from the right bank, an Eastern Pole, who knew everything about the

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system a week after the "liberating" army marched into Lvov. I knew it was going to be an occupation, and I believe most people thought the same. In fact there is even proof of that: the so-called "referendum" was a crushing defeat for the authorities, although the questions were quite innocent. Do you want a one- or two-chamber parliament? Do you want Szczecin and Wroclaw to belong to Poland? Do you support the land reform? One could as well ask: Are you against colonialism? In such a case I would have to say that I support colonialism, because it was not a vote for naive idealists, but a public opinion poll on one essential matter.

JT: Yes, the real question was: Do you accept the communist rule?

ZH: In the People's Republic of Poland elections are held not in order to choose the best people, but to test public opinion. How far has the society gone in allowing its self-enslavement? How tired is it? How far has it lost its faith? To what degree has Solidarity been forgotten, and so forth. I was never involved in the peasants' movement. Neither my background nor my profession inclined me that way, but in the first elections held in Poland I voted for Mikolajczyk. The so-called opposition—the Christian Democrats and Mikolajczyk's Polish Peasants' Party—virtually won by a landslide over the communist bloc despite harassments, kidnappings, and political murders. No matter how we look at it, the society resisted until 1948. It declared its rejection of the power imposed by force. That situation, which continues until today, involves all kinds of psychological discomforts. One has to be aware of one's status as a slave. This is a very unpleasant awareness, although a true one. It means that my life, my existence, the survival of my manuscripts, and my internal peace depends not even on a general, but on some major. Will I be able to realize my projects—even the most apolitical ones? Will I be able to finish my book on Dutch painting?

JT: Or go for a walk?

ZH: So it is the situation of a slave or—if we want to be more euphemistic—of a hostage. I am a hostage of the system. But people somehow try to live with their bondage, to tame the monster. They console themselves that things could be worse. For example, some people are in prison, but that's because they took unnecessary risks. The Gdansk trial is repulsive, but we are safe for a moment. We have a car and can go for a trip to the Augustow lakes—a very beautiful area. From the very start I looked at the new reality without illusions, and—it seems to me—that was the point of view of the majority of Polish society.

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JT: Certainly. Both our memory and the historical accounts confirm that.

ZH: And now we reach the problem of the enslavement of the elite. The Great Linguist, Stalin, once said that one does not need to buy a nation. One simply has to have engineers of human souls. The government needed legitimacy which was provided by the intellectuals, the so-called "creative" intelligentsia, and especially the writers. So I left that business. I did not want any part of it. I asked others why they stayed. . . . This period left no outstanding, even bearable, works. Here my friend Adam Michnik would quarrel with me about certain titles.

JT: Because of sustained propaganda, the sham character of that period had not yet been intellectually and emotionally recognized by everybody. This fact also has its consequences for the understanding of what you call the continued occupation.

ZH: All the works of that period were probably quite mediocre. I can hardly talk about them, because I hardly ever read them. You will have to excuse me. I believe that in such periods one should turn to the classics, to look at great paintings, to listen to the music. No power on earth could force me to read "The Short History of the Bolshevik Party." The only piece by Yosif Vissarionovich I always carry with me is his dissertation on language. Whenever *The Pickwick Papers* would not suffice, I open this work and my good mood comes back. It is a gigantic joke, a grotesque, a satire on rationalism.

JT: The actual content of these works need not be the subject of our conversation. Not reading certain books can also be a kind of testimony. I am trying to find out why certain people swallowed that red bait. I was lucky not to have done much damage myself, but as a young man I worshipped for some time the achievements of the Great Linguist. Why did I do that, why did the others, and why still did not others?

ZH: These questions concern the depths of the human soul. I shall probably die unreconciled with the world. At least that is how I would like to die. I lack knowledge of this world. I did not receive it from the participants in this crime against culture. I didn't get any answers. The only testimony can be found in Leopold Tyrmand's "Journals." He found a way of writing about these matters, although his book makes me uneasy, because he presents me as some kind of St. Simon the Stylite, who would rather starve . . . and so on. And yet he knew only half of what I was going through, since like real

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men we did not talk about embarrassing things. Why, then? I conducted a kind of investigation—not in order to write a book, but simply to know. I asked people with whom I had good relations, without any intent to humiliate them. Answers varied, but all were untrue and shifty. I feel ill at ease in the role of the prosecutor; I would rather be a defense counsel. I shall just say that in the case of a trial—not the Gdansk trial, of course, but a trial in the court of public opinion—my indictment would read as follows: the accused *a*)acted out of fear and ill-will; *b*)they acted out of pride which, paradoxically, was the product of their fear; *c*)they acted out of ulterior motives. These are terrible charges. The defense would repeat the claims of the accused: the interwar period was awful—a kind of fascism. It is true that after the Marshall's death things turned pretty nasty in Poland. I saw it as a high school student. I was politically aware at that time, although I do not know what I was. At first I was probably a Pilsudskiite. Later I joined the liberal camp—liberal in a certain sense—and that's what I have remained until today. A colleague sitting with me at the same desk was a communist sympathizer. Because of him I read the *Communist Manifesto.* A rather well-written piece. There is a prophetic sentence there: "A specter hovers over Europe. . . ." It is a good metaphor—a specter. It is an unreal, spectral system, and therefore so difficult to fight. I deny it any ontological status. My dearest friend Adam Michnik asked me: Why didn't you resist? Because there was nobody to polemicize with, and nothing to polemicize about. There was no language. The language has been sold, twisted—just as in Hitler's time. Well, let's not dwell on it any more.

JT: Pure negativism . . . this is the definition of Satan.

ZH: Pure negativism . . . this is also a theological problem. If God is love, why did He allow evil to flourish? Let's return to our grave charges: the fear, the ill will. Let us not be fooled. Those who returned from the Soviet Union could not claim ignorance.

JT: The East had already been there twice.

ZH: And they were the founders of the Writers' Union and the architects of the new cultural policy. I believe that the subject of culture is important, but one has to mention more general circumstances. There was a visible gap, then, between the elite and the sentiments of the nation. These people believed that the nation is a foolish crowd to be led by the enlightened few. Such are the beginnings of every fascist system: a self-appointed elite imposes upon the rest its own vision of the radiant future. I am not speaking about the

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young people of leftist leanings, whose parents made a revolution—let's say in China. This is a separate subject. I have a lot of warm feelings for them—people like Kuron or Modzelewski—while I have none for . . . let's call him Jozio.

JT: When you speak about "young people" do you mean those who were seventeen to twenty years old in 1949–1950?

ZH: That's right.

JT: If we set these people apart, we are talking here in the first place about those whose childhood ended during the war, or those who started publishing even before the war, and were really old boys when the war ended.

ZH: I'll settle my accounts with the old boys later. But the wartime generation . . . what name shall we give it? Jozio?

JT: Maybe Kazio?

ZH: No, Kazio is an old boy. Let's call him Tadzio. He is not from a leftist or a communist family. His father did not revolutionize China. He was not in the French Communist Party. Tadzio was a member of the Home Army . . . let's say in Vilno. I would like to hear Tadzio's confession. It would be a tale in the socialist realist style: rough, simplistic and vulgar—and everybody would be offended. Let us assume then, that I visit Tadzio many years later, and ask him: "Tadzio, why did you do all that?" And Tadzio says: "Well, you know, I was in the underground, then I left the underground and—I'm sure you'll understand—I was terribly afraid." Well, that's true. I was afraid, too. To be afraid is human. But what does one do with fear? Does fear sharpen intelligence? It turned out that in many cases it annihilated intelligence. But let us return to Tadzio. Tadzio continues: "So, you know, I was afraid. Joziek was arrested, Wladek was arrested. People were being sent to Siberia, thrown into jail. During interrogations they demanded to know who was your commander, what were the pseudonyms. But during that terror there were wonderful people who wrote books. So I wrote a poem in which I said that I had been betrayed, and I took it to *Odrodzenie*. And just imagine—a week later I bought *Odrodzenie*, and there it was—my poem on the third page! Later I received an invitation to visit the weekly. They asked me whether I had been writing before the war. The conversation was very pleasant. The editor was a real gentleman. We had coffee together." And thus Kazio started to be a little bit less afraid, at least some progress. The editors told him to remember them, if he had anything new. They did not suggest any subjects. It could be lyrical poetry, whatever. They were in-

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terested in almost anything. And Tadzio felt even better. In fact he felt great. He was met by the Secretary General himself, although he hadn't become a member of the Party yet. The secretary told him about a meeting with older writers on the new directions in literature. "So I went to the meeting with older writers who were supposed to instruct us," says Tadzio. "They were wonderful poets and novelists from before the war, but from the very beginning they did not like us because we were young. Therefore we launched a frontal attack. We told one of them that he was a symbolist—which was a terrible insult. We told another that he was a passéist—which was also an insult—and we left slamming the door. After we had left, we got together and decided to form a group. We formed a group and we went not even to the minister, but to Berman himself and told him: 'Comrade, we want to have a magazine of our own.' Comrade Berman agreed. Sure, we were young, we should have our own magazine. So we started a magazine and called it *Nurt*. It was a very bold magazine for those times. We attacked some people for symbolism and some others for passéism, and we published mostly ourselves. Mieciek started to defend abstract painting, which was at that time under attack, and he had some problems, although Picasso was a member of the Party. We were very tough then—we were the opposition. But *Nurt* was shut down—God knows why—and the group dispersed. Mieciek went to *Poglad* and started to praise socialist realism in art—all those peasant women with cows and happy miners. I continued to write. I was getting tired of poetry. The time is not suitable for poetry, I said, and I had better write a novel. It had to be a factory novel. Socialist realism had been proclaimed. But my colleagues were faster. Silesia and the miners were all taken care of. Witold got the shipyards, somebody else—sugar plants. I got the furniture industry. A bit marginal, but I took it anyway. I went to the factory—all expenses covered—I talked to the director, who always had time for comrade writer. I talked to all the leading workers, and after returning home I concocted a novel. . . ."

This is the answer I would like to hear. It certainly is a bit rough, but close to the truth. I am not interested in anecdotes about who persuaded whom and with what tricks, but in how it all developed from innocent beginnings. Not in the torments of the soul but in a sequence of dry facts.

And now about the old boys, who knew quite a bit of life. They said that the interwar era was bad, terrible, and towards the end very close to fascism. This term was in free circulation then. It is

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true that Bereza[1] was an awful thing. Poverty in the countryside was terrible, too. . . .

JT: We do remember all that.

ZH: We do. But it was also a country of people, who worked for it, although they did not agree with its government. It was a country of writers and scholars who had no equals in the postwar era. Polish high schools were not bad, and the universities were excellent—and not only those from before World War I, like Lvov or Kracow. The new universities in Poznan, Warsaw, Vilno had magnificent professors to whom we owe our life. Well, before the war there was Falanga. But one has to see both the dark and the bright sides. There was anti-Semitism—no one denies that. On the other hand remember the Kielce provocation in the "People's Poland," after the war. The most repulsive pogrom ever seen on this soil happened shortly after the referendum.

JT: The 6th of July, 1946. It was about two weeks after the referendum.

ZH: Yes. It was meant to turn the attention of the world away from the referendum. They slaughtered innocent people using the mob. It was all manipulated. There is proof of that, but the old boys did not pay any attention to these facts. There was the radiant future; there was literature. And now, to the ulterior motives. They were stimulated. The plan was to separate the intellectual elite from the miserable life of the so-called "people." First they started to build a greenhouse in Krakow, then in Lodz, and finally in Warsaw—in the very center. At the beginning of the fifties I saw the "winter campaign of grain purchase." The stores were empty. Why? "Because dark peasants are stockpiling their crops." Groups of "workers" travelled to the villages to confiscate and destroy the property of kulaks. A kulak was someone who had about twenty acres. These were the farms that produced for the market! The society was antagonized. And in the midst of this terrible murder of the nation, a kind of flea circus was established with its headquarters on Krakowskie Przedmiescie. The followers of the "Polish Avant-garde" attacked the followers of the "Wiadomosci Literackie" group. Books written in those days are mostly paper with print on it. No one with a sense of humor could possibly read them, but they made the school reading lists.

JT: Like *Ashes and Diamonds*.

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1. An "isolation camp" for political prisoners established in 1934. Persons sent there were mostly communists and members of Ukrainian and Byelorussian opposition.

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ZH: *Ashes and Diamonds*, reprinted again and again, poisoning the minds of the young. One hears that it was the "Hegelian sting." I am sorry, but Hegel was dead. He died a century earlier. It was Berman, Sokorski, Kronski who did the stinging. When I am speaking about a crime, it is the crime against the young generation of those now in their twenties and thirties. They are still being raised on this kind of literature. This is a crime against the Holy Spirit—an unpardonable sin. I am a Roman Catholic, but more Roman than Catholic.

JT: That's true. The generation that wrote at that time—in fact an even older generation was still active then—has not analyzed its own position thoroughly enough. I think that the sting—whatever it was—happened earlier. Those procommunist sympathies, which continued after the war, originated in the interwar period or even earlier. I think that the longer our historical perspective, the further back in time we have to go to find the roots of the phenomena culminating in the forties and fifties. Milosz, who broke with all that, was for a short time, as a member of the Vilno "Zagary" group, a follower of this inquisitional formula that pictures the writer as a helper of politicians in training human souls according to the dictates of politics. Milosz later withdrew. As a Polish diplomat he was only a conformist. Why did so many different people at different times follow the same path? By the thirties a lot already was known about the Eastern neighbor.

ZH: It should have been known. At least after the Great Trials. Why then did the oldest of the old boys choose that line? Andrzejewski once tried to explain to me that communism was for him like "Pascal's night." I am not sure whether he remembered Pascal at that time, or whether he was so influenced by Zhdanov that he had forgotten who Pascal was. Let's not hide behind metaphysics. Let's not inflate ourselves like balloons. We are talking about primitive matters in a primitive language. The old boys—and girls—knew everything very well. Perhaps the times of terror were too much for a literary imagination. But what does it really mean? The spirit of history does not exist. The system was built by people. One can list their names. First there was a small group of agents who attached themselves to the intellectuals, and the intellectuals played "Sonata Pathetique" for the new order. It was petty, foolish, pitiable, mendacious. Nothing to talk about.

JT: You have touched upon a very important subject. There was no material for "Pascal's night." Those who speak about metaphysics

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should be able to demonstrate it through their own writing. Yet the writing of that time shows no metaphysical experience at all, no pyramids of questions, no tragedy—not to speak of simple truth.

ZH: Because the life of artists was an idyll, although ridden with fear. One could always fall into that terrible pit where the real society lived. Clubs, resorts, high standard of living, the literary salon of Madame Nalkowska, travels abroad. The gang of agents badly needed the intelligentsia, the elite—a kind of cultural *nomenklatura*. What did the government have to offer? The divine status of a demiurge. Andrzejewski once told me that he was invited to visit by Berman. His host paced nervously in his office. Finally he stopped in front of the window and said,"This country is on the edge of a civil war. Only a writer of your stature and talent could possibly. . . ." Thus he suggested the subject of *Ashes and Diamonds*. They suddenly felt that "the helm of history" rested also in their hands and that it was worth lying a bit to the confused nation upon which they looked with contempt. Did they know anything about the lives of the workers? Did they care? They were concerned with a certain order, with *soll* instead of *sein*, to use Kant's terms. Not with what is, but with what should be. Trying to write about the reality, they wrote about something that was not. Later on they discovered that there was something like the reality of their own writing. They created a closed circle in which people reflected each other. There was also the garden of earthly delights: miraculous metamorphoses, the spring of eternal youth. Manes of hair grew on the heads of balding prose writers: timid bourgeois esthetes suddenly spoke with borrowed yet sonorous and powerful voices. A forgotten avant-garde poet was followed by a retinue of promising young women poets. What a pity that this gala was directed by an old Cheka agent. To this day some fellows—recipients of this or that state award or medal—use the government hospitals, which have better medicine, although they are now in the opposition. It is all very confusing. We agree that we cannot demand much from the younger generation until the older one decides to tell it all. I do not object to the fact that the accused wants to defend himself. I expect him only to find some atonement. This is not a Catholic confession, but if I have betrayed my friend, I should at least visit him and express my sincere regret. But here we have responsibility to the whole society—the future generation that is still fed this socialist realist drivel.

JT: Would you agree that the Polish fascist potential, which germinated during the two interwar decades, came to fruition in the for-

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ties and fifties? That it was simply Polish fascism, and that's what we should call it.

ZH: That's right.

JT: As far as I know, nobody is willing to use such explicit language.

ZH: Yes, certain euphemisms and circumlocutions are being used in order to avoid ominous analogies.

JT: This is not only a matter of elegance, but also of showing certain continuity. The tragic leftist movement, which developed in Poland much earlier, contained certain potential for the struggle for human rights. But there were also germs of fascism, which the state provided with a good growing medium after the war.

ZH: I agree.

JT: An historian of political thought and political activity will discover a number of symbolic figures. You have mentioned Falanga, and the postwar period witnessed a continuation of certain National Democratic trends.

ZH: Exactly. Bolcio Piasecki published his bulletins, closed his ranks, and his men greeted each other with the Nazi salute. When in 1955 Tyrmand and I wanted to publish a series of articles about all that, only one managed to see the light. The rest were killed. As Milosz said, the party is the heir of ONR.[2] After the war these ruffians got their own weeklies, dailies, publishing houses. And the fascist mentality, whether red or brown, corresponds to certain human types. It is perennial, and it can be traced throughout history: dictatorship, contempt for and antagonism toward the society, terror, demagogy, conquest, and the belief in the total plasticity of human nature. Nihilism.

JT: Such fascist tendencies seem to appear when a certain group, or elite, has experienced an historical trauma. This is the moment of highest susceptibility. One could see it in Germany, in Russia, but also in Poland. At first it appeared that the heroic attitudes from the time of the war would be upheld, that the nation was hardened. But it turned out that some unbelievable annealment took place. You

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2. *Oboz Narodowo Demokratyczny* (National Radical Camp) was an extreme right-wing, nationalistic party with fascist tendencies. From the ONR there emerged a "Falanga" group that openly emulated the Nazis. Although small and active mainly in the universities, it was responsible for a series of brutal beatings and persecutions of Jewish students. The leader of "Falanga" was Boleslaw Piasecki—after the war the head of a proregime Catholic organization "Pax."

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saw it and knew it well. What was your life like with such awareness?

ZH: I believed that the Stalinist era would last until the end of my life. I was absolutely sure. Not only I, but also Tyrmand and two or three friends in Warsaw, with whom I could speak openly. One had to choose internal emigration, to study Greek architecture, Rubens, to borrow foreign magazines that managed to get through. That was a life of exile. Was it difficult? Adam Michnik says that I am winking to my readers when I say it wasn't. In fact it wasn't.

JT: Let me quote you:

> It didn't require great character at all
> our refusal disagreement and resistance
> we had a shred of necessary courage
> but fundamentally it was a matter of taste . . .[3]

ZH: That's right! Auden once wrote that he never had any problems making choices. Choices came to him as a natural thing: he went to the Spanish war; he was a communist sympathizer; the whole atmosphere in the West favored the left, so he flirted with communism. A lucky man led by the gods. For me only the first decisive step was a choice—the first "no." The rest were just consequences. Let me say something *pro domo mea*. In fact, I wasn't very interesting for the communists because I did not want to live "at any cost." Besides, I had absolutely no political ambitions. For me leadership is the most terrible thing. During the occupation I was once responsible for a handful of men. I still have gray hair from that time. I can take certain risks myself. But to give orders? When I had made my choice, I had no other way. It was a situation like that of a sailor in the open sea, or of a mountain climber. Or perhaps it was just like choosing one's profession or a woman to spend your life with—in happiness and misfortune. These are the natural risks of everyday life. Besides, I wasn't interesting. I did not disclose my thoughts and my writing. When I was still a member of the Writers' Union I told myself that I would never write anything according to party directions. I simply won't. Can someone who feels no attraction to women be called an ascetic? I had an immense psychological block. Is it a virtue, or is it invalidism?

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3. Translated from the Polish by Bogdana and John Carpenter.

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JT: If it is invalidism, then it is in the Mannian sense. Mann said that amidst the celebration of health and vigor, one sickly, creative man is worth more than a company of strong bucks.

ZH: Besides—believe me—it didn't pay even in terms of one's whole life. I saw Andrzejewski in a state of decomposition. I have seen others. . . . I am not talking about the younger ones because they could have made mistakes trying to emulate the old boys. It is a myth, and self-justification, to claim that the Polish October was made by intellectuals. It was made by the Linguist, who decided to move to the great beyonds. Then, there was a struggle among the Diadochi. Malenkov, Khrushchev, or somebody else? So it fell on Khrushchev. They had to do something with those who were left over from Stalin's time, so they did away with Beria to show they were more liberal, to end the cold war and to get meat and grain. It is vanity to think that one can influence the course of history by writing poetry. It is not the barometer that changes the weather. Please note that the only authentic workers' uprising in Poland—the Poznan rebellion—had no resonance in literature. It took the intellectuals by surprise.

JT: There are just a few poems on that subject.

ZH: That's right. And the second time—the coastal cities in 1970. Another surprise. Nothing again.

JT: I would like to return for a moment to the poem I've quoted—"The Power of Taste." I fully agree with you, but I also agree with Michnik, who—as you say—suspects some irony in your declaration. There is something called "moral integrity," which governs even our reflexes, even our taste—according to Plato's conjunction between the good and the beautiful. In some people the moral sense was weak, open to manipulations. In some others it was deep-rooted and manifested itself in their first reactions. The writers of that period essentially lacked the voice of their conscience—to use an old-fashioned concept.

ZH: Yes, we should be bound by the inalienable character of human conscience. An intellectual exists in order to think in his own name, even against everybody else. That's what he is paid, or beaten, for.

JT: Do you see a connection between the situation in Poland and the more general European passion for intellectual poker—the insane Marxist poker that possessed European minds?

ZH: Certainly. But there were others, like Camus. . . .

JT: His more illustrious pronouncements were banned in Poland. This is the "ad usum Delphini" formula. Never show the intellectual's fangs, only his shampooed tail.

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ZH: My intellectual ally, Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, has analyzed this phenomenon. He helped me to understand this Western pestilence, unlike those pompous muddleheads who made the whole mess and now walk in the glory of martyrdom. The martyrs of their own mistake? Perhaps they should rather go to the desert and do penitence. That is what I would do. I would keep silent—at least for some time.

JT: Was a better alternative possible for those years? We are allowed to speculate about history because we are not historians. I am sure you will defend the idea that man is always free to choose. Otherwise what we are saying here would have no sense.

ZH: One could translate the classics, opera librettos, one could write for the drawer.

JT: And yet it did not happen. Why? You have told me what was decisive for you, why you could not act in any other way. But those who could and did? I think that some of them would be able to summon their courage if they were more mature. But that implies a different moral dimension because meanness is in us. It is there. It waits.

ZH: All it took was a gesture. In times of terror every moral gesture is a risk—that's obvious—but it is also surprisingly funny. As if a knight in armor walked on stage in a contemporary play. A comic effect. Even today, when we agree that one should declare oneself on the side of truth and freedom, it sounds somehow embarrassing. But there was and is no other way. Freedom is always tragic. A free man is lonely. He is like someone stricken with a deadly disease, like a madman or an anchorite. As an alternative there was the collective life on the "right" side of history. Yet it was an illusory and dubious life full of intrigue, insidious maneuvers and personal compromises. When you ask an eyewitness of those times, he'll shower you with anecdotes, jokes, allusions, fragments of old courtly intrigues and games. This conversation should have taken place in 1955 or 1956. We are thirty years late. A nation that loses memory loses its conscience. Crimes committed against society seem to be exempt from punishment. The opportunity for a truthful analysis of the origins of Polish literature was missed in 1955–1956. I do not ask for any self-criticism, only for common decency and a sober judgement. When I visited Germany for the first time my publisher asked me where I would like to go—to an opera, to a theater? No—I said—to the Frankfurt trial. It was a trial of the henchmen from Auschwitz. Well, I went and I left disgusted. I did not see even a touch of demonism. Here I agree with Hannah Arendt about the banality of

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evil. Everybody tries to inflate his experience to demonic proportions. They do not want to admit that it was base, vulgar, trivial. In Frankfurt I saw elderly middle-class gentlemen who were stubbornly defending themselves. Nobody wanted to admit that he shot, that he killed. The witnesses were dead, or mumbled something incomprehensible, confusing the facts. I was also at the first trial held in Krakow shortly after the war—a fair trial and a credit to Polish justice. Those whose crimes were proved were sentenced to death. Some got ten, eight years, or even less. The camp doctor was acquitted and sent back to Germany because it turned out that he helped some people. One should keep in mind the popular moods of that time. The memories were still fresh in 1945. We were taken to the court by our professor of law, Gwiazdowski—a lesson for future lawyers. These were the last glimmers of justice. In the Stalinist period a portion of the society resisted, too. It did not take part in this race of servilism. Why, then, did the engineers—or rather tinkerers—of human souls compromise themselves so much? I experience it as something painful. I shall die ignorant of our time. All I know is that the human soul is impenetrable. I can learn nothing from those who "laid the foundations of socialism." Fear, pride, perverse joy of humiliation, lowly material interests—how can one make literature out of something like that? The sad clarity of divisions. I was surprised when I met people who tended this socialist garden. They were not what I expected—especially the younger ones. One of them wrote about an officer of the Security who—tired after an interrogation—talked with the icon of Dzierzhynsky. Today everybody laughs at that stuff. . . . And suddenly I meet the author—an intelligent, sensitive man with a sense of humor. Now we are on first-name terms; we even drink together. I would like to meet a real demon, but so far—no luck. Maybe it is encouraging that the devil leases a human soul only for a while. There are no demons, only hallucinations of the sick mind. They should be exorcised in the germination stage through common sense and laughter—in Tyrmand's way. The theoretical base of this ideology also went with the devil. The theory of race invented by Mr. Chamberlain was pseudo-scientific gibberish. Marx's prophecies were not fulfilled. How could one believe that the closer one gets to paradise, the more intensive the class struggle? One should not have listened to that, one should have turned away. In 1956 they thought they brought about the thaw. Next there came a painful blow. Gomulka was not only primitive, he knew that the government was already firmly in the saddle.

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It had its own apparatus of repression, lots of prisons, a sufficiently corrupted judiciary. Who needed *Ashes and Diamonds?* Who needed literature? Suddenly the writers saw the social demand disappearing. They felt the emptiness, so they joined the opposition. They loved us, they pampered us, and suddenly they dumped us. That's how it looked in general terms. 1956 destroyed the myth of the engineers of human souls—the myth of political usefulness of those who were ready to support the system with their poems, paintings and symphonies. The so-called elite was sent away empty-handed despite its good service because the new lord was an upstart and held the intellectuals in contempt.

JT: The intellectuals were rejected although they helped the regime in the most tragic times for the society—after the forged elections, when the Home Army people were killed or sent to prison.

ZH: Stalin expected that the sovietization of Poland would take longer than it actually did. The party elite and the liberals closed their ranks and the citadel was taken in no time at all.

JT: Yes, but the Polish intelligentsia did not sell out during the German occupation; it did not seek any accommodation. . . .

ZH: . . . some nationalistic factions included.

JT: And what happened a couple of years later, when the repressions were also severe and aimed at the nation's elite, although less spectacular since people were not executed in the streets?

ZH: What happened was the cultural revolution at the universities.

JT: The triumphant Congress of Science in 1951, where I was also present. Always the same conjurers. Later there were other purges, like the one at the Warsaw Philosophy Department after 1968.

ZH: Let's start from the very beginning: The end of the forties and the early fifties witnessed the revolution at the universities, or simply,the liquidation of the Polish Humanities. There is no direct testimony about that, only naked facts. The perpetrators remain silent, the victims mostly died. A blank page. But it all happened not in Peking, but on Krakowskie Przedmiescie. Our Napoleonic generals, like Kolakowski or Pomian, did not do the dirty work. They stoked the ideological fire. The dirty work was left to a group of activists who later occupied prominent positions in the party. This earthquake wiped out scholars representing various schools—people of great academic and moral authority: Adjukiewicz, the Ossowskis, Elzenberg, Ingarden, Tatarkiewicz . . . a long and decorous list. Not a single one of them adopted the newspeak. Not a single one renounced his phenomenological or neopositivist "fallacy." If they

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could resist, why couldn't the others? No one spoke on their behalf. Only the correct Marxist philosophy was left on the field. A terrible generation gap resulted. The struggle with bourgeois scholarship was raging everywhere. The strategy was simple. Out of sheer curiosity I went once in the fifties to a meeting of a youth organization. A big blonde fellow got up and said it was time to finish with bourgeois professors. Who would take care of Professor Konrad Gorski? "I will," said somebody from the floor. Very well. How was it done? The professor entered the classroom and started a lecture, let's say on Krasinski. The young man jumped up and said: "You are telling us about Krasinski, but you do not stress the importance of the class struggle." The elderly professor interrupted his lecture to explain that the class struggle was not the subject of his lecture, and tried to continue. But the vigilant youth jumped up again: "But what about the class struggle?" And what if we extend our analogy to the events in Vienna shortly before the *Anschluss*? Both here and there lectures of such "enemies" as Wittgenstein or Tatarkiewicz were disrupted by howling thugs. They howled from different ideological premises, but we can safely forget these differences because Lenin was worthy of Chamberlain and vice versa.

JT: I remember those years very well. People expressing different ideas were being isolated. The exchange of ideas was forbidden.

ZH: And the warnings that we would all end up on the garbage heap of history. There was a certain young man who always emerged from behind the nearest street corner and followed me, mumbling that I lived on the garbage heap of history. That was his party assignment. He did not try to beat me. Well, he was weaker than I. Besides, he came from a good bourgeois family. The sadistic element is one of the foundations of fascism. The incredible ease with which one disposes of one's opponents.

JT: The hatred for the "old" as opposed to the "young" is also characteristic not only of fascist but also socialist realist language. But how do you understand Gombrowicz's bet on the "eternal youth?"

ZH: Well, that was innocent, erotic—immaturity as an aesthetic concept.

JT: But it was also an ontological concept. It is hard to tell whether it is positive or tragic. Probably both. I once saw the French premiere of his *Operetta* in the Theatre National Populaire during the student rebellion in Paris shortly after 1968. There was a masquerade in the streets—"chienlit"—to use De Gaulle's term. I think it was a very accurate description. I was teaching at the Sorbonne and at Nanterre

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then. I talked to the young people in the streets. How many fascist notes there were! I have heard that French youth needs freedom, but Polish youth should be sent to prison because socialism needs discipline. And the *Operetta* somehow coincided with the mood, and the young people received it enthusiastically, perhaps because of the play's primitive worship of youth, or perhaps because it placed the old, decaying world in a coffin. A coffin on stage—that was something that harmonized with the anarchic mood. Of course Gombrowicz also portrayed cruel, sadistic youth in *Ferdydurke*, *Pornografia*, *Cosmos*, and *The Wedding* in the character of Henry. But in Gombrowicz's works all people—young and old—are cruel and devoid of soft, warm, nonbiological feelings. This is a mirror presented to the contemporary world of cruel fascist movements, and Gombrowicz must have been aware of that. Shortly after the introduction of martial law in Poland I started my first lecture at the Sorbonne with a long quotation from Gombrowicz's character Henry's monologue. Henry the ruler orders everybody thrown into jail and held there muzzled. My voice started to tremble. Gombrowicz's cold fury went against the grain of Polish literature.

ZH: Because he was a great individualist. His great taste and lordly gestures did not agree with our soup-kitchen writing. Had he stayed in Poland, he would never have become a collaborator. His charm was in his ability to make a fool of everybody. I visited him once with some medicines, and he quickly made an ass of me because I had not read *L'Être et le Neant*. He had such an aristocratic approach to philosophy. My attitude towards him is ambiguous. I think he would be a great artist if he weren't so deprived of love. He cultivated his garden like a master. Yet because his personal life, his experiences, were cruel, he forged them into a vision of the world and into his smooth, dry, surgical style—his crystalline language. He even corrected Dante. In one of his sketches he analyzes Dante's tercets and shows that they could have been written better. Ungaretti nearly killed me when he learned that I was a Pole. There is a kind of sadism in all that, but sadism that has nothing to do with this Satanic pageant we were talking about.

JT: You have said it was miserable and laughable literature. It was being destroyed by a certain mythology. But can we say that ideology also was a bait for various literary mediocrities, offering them the only chance of prominence?

ZH: It is difficult to say who is a good writer. There are very few real writers in the world. The species is becoming extinct. After Mann

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and Faulkner it is hard to find a true writer. Beckett and Ionesco created a world of their own. I would add Gombrowicz. We have mentioned Milosz. Who else? A couple of other . . . Borges, for example. There are about two thousand registered writers in Poland. No wonder, then, that they were looking for support in the world of politics, which gave them awards, medals, paper, seats in the parliament. It created ranks, just as in prerevolutionary Russia. There were general-workers and colonel-writers, cadets and non-coms. The financial situation of the majority of members of the Writers' Union in those days was fantastic. Their careers were brilliant and fast. Italian, English, German, and French writers are miserably poor. The great essayist Cioran, for example, is said to dine in some students' canteen and to be supported by Ionesco. His books bring him no money. An average writer in the West cannot support himself from his writing. He has to work at a university—if he has a suitable education—or in a bank, like Eliot. Whoever chooses to become a writer takes an immense risk, whereas here they lived in the lap of luxury, above the average of other professionals. The only risk was political. One had to know which way the wind blows. The material and social position of a writer is very important. I keep harping on this inelegant subject like some kitchen maid. But here we come to the question of talent. If one was a member of the Writers' Union it was obvious that his books would be published. I do not know of a single case where a book was turned down because it was badly written.

I conceive the duty of an intellectual as seeing the facts with dazzling clarity and—if they are simple—to give them simple names, to learn to live with despair, to tell oneself that perhaps one has to write, but one does not necessarily have to publish. Is publishing some kind of obligation? If what I've written is worth reading, it would probably be worth reading also in ten years. Manuscripts can get lost, but a great subject never really leaves a writer. There is an exquisite anecdote about Paul Valéry and Albert Einstein. Valéry, a true French writer, asked Einstein what he did with his ideas. Did he write them down on small pieces of paper, or on larger sheets, or perhaps in a notebook? Albert Einstein answered with the simplicity of great men: You see, one has one or two ideas in a lifetime, and one is not likely to forget them. That's how it is.

Let us not hurry. We are approaching the end, so let me confess, I would much prefer to avoid this conversation. I rarely think about the "period of errors and distortions," and when I do, it fills me

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with disgust. I am certainly far from being objective. But how can I be objective, if I am like the man—let me give this classical metaphor—who stands at the walls of the Colosseum, hears the roar of the animals, and sees bodies secretly carried out. It was the worse part of me that did the talking. When I try to write I throw this part out of the window. I regret that I could not avoid naming names, but history is not made by phantoms. Serious discussion of this subject is a difficult task because at the crucial moments the adversaries are gagged, or, later, our enemies are no longer the same people, and talking about their past is a social offense. All we are left with are kisses and fistfights in the alleys. Young people pierce me with their innocent eyes that seem to say: "It's a fine mess you've gotten us into, uncle." Or more politely: "You kept your silence for a while. At the right moment you made your career, and now you can meditate in silence again." It seems they would like to learn the strategy of life, the strategy of literature. How can I explain that I have no strategy. I don't even know if I am right. And if I am, it is in a defensive way. That's why a person blackens paper. When I read their poems—very patriotic, very just, because they are against violence and injustice—I would like to say: life is more complicated, more mysterious and more convoluted than the party, the army, the police. Let us detach ourselves a little from this truly horrible everyday reality and try to write about doubt, anxiety and despair.

JT: To be on the "right" side is a moral obligation, but it does not suffice to make good literature.

ZH: This is the tragedy of young people who were brought up on socialist realism. Here we come back to the starting point of our conversation. They also believe that it is enough to have the "right" idea and the form—rhymed or unrhymed—will come by itself later.

JT: Let's end our conversation on this less than encouraging note.

Translated from the Polish by Jaroslaw Anders

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POEMS

Joseph Brodsky

THE NEW JULES VERNE

To Leo and Nina Loseff

I

A perfect line of horizon. Without a blot. A swanky
clipper. Whose Franz Liszt profile keeps stabbing
the waves. Tight cables are creaking. A naked monkey,
with a scream, leaps out of the naturalist's hot cabin.

Dolphins bounce along. As someone remarked somewhere,
only bottles in the bar experience no seasickness.
A squall tears off the punchline of a joke, and the captain's bare
fists in a flurry challenge the mizzen's stiffness.

At times, the piano's tinkling wafts from the lounge: pure, guileless.
The navigator ponders the course, scratching behind his ear.
And the blueness of space straight ahead blends within the spyglass
with the blueness of space withering at the rear.

II

You can tell a passenger from a sailor
by the swishing silk of his underwear,
by the quality of what he eats, and where,
by the repetition of some meaningless question and a
general air of failure.

You can tell a sailor from a lieutenant
by the absence of an epaulette,
by the age that he's at,
by the nerves wrung tight like cables or, say, a pennant.

You can tell a lieutenant from a captain
by the stripes, his hazel eyes' razzmatazz,

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by the snapshot of Blanche or of Françoise,
by his reading of Kant, Maupassant, Karl Marx, and his buying
smokes by the carton.

You can tell a captain from the Admiralty
by his lonely thinking, by profound disgust
towards anything that is blue and vast,
by his memory of his in-laws, which loses, he thinks, its accuracy.

And only a ship acts always as though she could
be another ship. Combing the waves that hold her,
a ship resembles at once an albatross and an alder
from under whose feet the ground has slipped for good.

III

Exchanges in the Lounge

"Of course the Archduke is a monster! And of course it matters!
But he's trying his best. Whereas his subjects, they . . . "
"Masters resent their slaves. Slaves resent their masters.
Feels like a vicious circle!" "Like a sort of ring-buoy, I'd say."

"What a splendid sherry!" "Gosh, you know, I couldn't sleep a wink.
It's this frightful sun: it burns your skin through the bodice."
". . . but what if we've sprung a leak!? I've read leaks are hard to
notice
Imagine, we've sprung a leak! And we are—to sink!

Has this ever happened to you, lieutenant?" "No, but I have had a
sour
experience with a shark." "Yeah? But I mean, a leak. What if . . . "
"Well, then you'll finally meet the passenger from 8-F."
"Who is that?" "She's the governor's daughter, sailing to Curaçao."

IV

Exchanges on the Deck

"I, Professor, too, as a kid, wanted, and badly so,
to discover some insect, or better still, a virus . . . "
"Right. And what happened?" "Well, science involves weird

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values . . .
Plus, the usual tzores . . . " "Sorry?" "You know: the dough."

"What is man anyway? I tell you: he is a gnat!"
"But back there, in Russia, Monsieur, do you also have rubber, as
in . . . "
"Voldemar! I said stop it! You bit my lip, you rat.
Don't forget, Voldemar, that I am . . . " "I am sorry, cousin."

"Listen, buddy." "Well, what?" "What is that thing far-off?"
"Where?" "On the right." "I see nothing." "At two o'clock, out there."
"Oh, that . . . maybe a whale. Got any smokes?" "Nope. Zero . . .
but—it's rising! It's rising so fast! And it is, by Jove . . . "

V

The sea is more various than the terra
firma. It's harder for you to grapple
with, not to mention stare at.
A fish is more intricate than an apple.

The land means four solid walls, a ceiling.
We are scared of wolves or of bears. Although some are ready
to detect in the latter a human feeling
and address him as 'Teddy.'

The sea has no room for these sorts of worries.
A whale, in its primordial splendor,
won't respond to a name like 'Boris';
'Dick' is a better tender.

The sea is filled with surprises; some are unpleasant.
Many a maritime upheaval
can't be ascribed to the evil crescent
of the Moon, or the human eye's lesser evil.

Sea-dwellers' blood is colder than ours. Their goggle
mesmerizes even fishmongers. The late Charles Darwin
would have quit legislating his gentle jungle
had he tried some limited scuba-diving.

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VI

Exchange on the Bridge

"Captain! We're passing the fathoms where *The Black Prince*
went down. For reasons unknown." "Navigator Benz!
Return to your cabin and sober up!"
" . . . the fathoms where the Russian *Tzarina*, too, took the rap
and was lost . . . " "Navigator Benz! I'll banish you to the can!
Do you hear me?!" " . . . for reasons un . . . "

The clipper's unswerving on its blue track.
Africa, Asia, The New and The Old World lag
behind. Taut sails look like question marks in profile.
Space's answer is in the back.

VII

Exchange in a Cabin

"Irina!" "Ah? What?" "Take a look at that thing, Irina."
"But I am asleep." "All the same. Look!" "Where?" "In the porthole.
What is that?" "Looks like somebo . . . like samba . . . like, well, I
mean a submarine." "But it coils!" "So what. In the water, all
things coil." "Irina!" "What? Where are you dragging me? I am
completely naked."
"Yes, but just look!" "Oh stop pushing me!" "You see?" "Well, I
look. Yes, it coils. But I think—I take it—
But it's a gigantic octopus! And it climbs in here!!! Nikolai!!!"

VIII

The sea is ostensibly lifeless, yet
it's full of monstrous life-forms which your mind-set
won't grasp until you hit the king-size sea-bed.

At times, this gets proven by what's been angled
or by shimmeying waves whose rather languid
mirror reflects things happening under the blanket.

While on the surface, a man wants to sail fast and be there first
Submerged, he gets this wish reversed.

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Suddenly, he feels the thirst.

There, underneath, man feels dry within.
Life appears to him short and green.
Submerged, man can be only a submarine.

From the mouth, bubbles are bursting free.
In the eyes, an equivalent of sunrise replaces glee.
In the ears, a colorless baritone keeps uttering: "One. Two. Three."

IX

"Dear Blanche, I write this to you sitting inside a gigantic octopus.
A miracle, but the stationery and your picture survived. This jelly
is hard to inhale. Yet in a sense it's populous:
there are a couple of savages, both playing the ukalele.
Main thing: it's dark. I strain my eyes and listen.
Sometimes I make out some arches and vaults. When I write, it also
becomes less black.
I resolve to examine the metabolic system.
That's the only railroad to freedom. Kisses. Your faithful Jacques."

"It's like being back in the womb . . . Still, one should be grateful
for the octopus. Sharks are worse. So is water as such—for yours
truly.
Am still searching. The savages brought a grapefruit.
But when I ask for directions, all I hear is 'hoolie-hoolie.'
All I see are infinite, slippery, coiling tunnels.
Some peculiar, tangled system that's hard to memo-
rize. And unless I'm delirious, yesterday in these trammels
I bumped into somebody who calls himself Captain Nemo."

"Nemo again. Invited me to his rooms. I went.
He says he has reared this octopus as a protest
against society. Well, earlier, I understand,
he was married, with kids. But his wife—the hottest
pants in town . . . and so forth. And he had no choice. He says,
the world drowns in Evil. The octopus ('opus' for some) avenges
hubris and heartlessness, alias earthly ways.
Promised me immortality if I don't leave the trenches."

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"Tuesday. Supper at Nemo's. Caviar, cognac, *fromage*—from, I
guess, both the *Prince* and *Tzarina*. The savages served: good
manners.
We discussed the matter raised yesterday, that is, my
immortality; Pascal's *Pensées*; recent La Scala tenors.
Just think of it: evening, candles. The octopus all around.
Nemo with his goatee and baby-blue, nay, prenatal
eyes. If I think of his loneliness, my heart starts to pound. . . . "

That's the last Mlle. Blanche Delarue heard from Jacques Benz,
Navigator.

X

When the ship doesn't arrive at the port of call
on time, or later on, the Business
Manager says in his office, "Hell!"
The Admiralty says, "Jesus."

Both are quite wrong. But how could they know what had
transpired? You can't interrogate a seagull
or a shark with its streamlined head.
Nor is sending an eager

doggy down the track of much help. And anyway, what sort
of tracks are there at sea? All this is valiant
bunk. One more triumph—via the absurd—
for waves contesting dry land.

Oceanic events are, as a rule, abrupt.
Still, long afterwards, the waves toss the remnants of their brief
sally:
life-vests, splinters of masts, a rat—
none with fingerprints, sadly.

And then comes autumn. And later on, winter cuts
in. The sirocco tatters awnings that summer fancied.
Silent waves can drive the best attorney nuts
with their show of a sunset.

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And what gets crystal clear is that it's dumb to grill
(turning your vocal chords into a short-wave's risen
pitch) the blue ripples perfecting their sharp-as-steel
line of the horizon.

Something bobs up in the papers—burying under their slants
the facts—driblets really. Who can crack it . . .
A woman wearing brown clutches the drapes and slumps
slowly onto the carpet.

The horizon's improving. The air's filled with iodine and salt.
Far away, breakers pummel with great abandon
some inanimate object. And the bell of old
keeps tolling grimly at Lloyds of London.

(1977) Translated from the Russian by the Author

Alfred Corn

NEW YEAR

Another year, another return—
Each one has drawn closer to home.
A perennial naif, whose pleased
intake of breath is meant to welcome
back the urban crush, prefers

familiar brickfronts and squares
even to vistas down the proud
colonnades and quays of Paris,
mountains lost among high clouds,
or domes at dawn in the pastel east.

These westward windows, fifteenth floor,
make a triptych frame for sunset—
which shows the buildings as somehow more

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thoughtful than they often get
described as being; while the sky,

with blue impartiality,
may be forecasting the first
snowfall . . . . To sense purpose in turning
to the desk again seems right,
the crossed-out sentences and lines

summoning words and pauses always
nearer those that will be felt
as having stood by from the start,
waiting to assume their place.
The heat clicks on. Somewhere a bell. . . .

All the objects here have twinned themselves
with stories. The room's a cradle, or an ark;
it says that half the point of our departure
is coming back—suggestion followed by one
who breaks off work to watch the setting sun.

Eavan Boland

THE BOTTLE GARDEN

I decanted them—feather mosses, fan-shaped plants,
asymmetric greys in the begonia—
into this globe which shows up how the fern shares
the invertebrate lace of the sea-horse.

The sun is in the bottle garden,
submarine, out of its element
when I come down on a spring morning;
my sweet, greenish, inland underwater.

And in my late thirties, past the middle way,

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I can say how did I get here?
I hardly know the way back, still less forward.
Still, if you look for them, there are signs:

Earth stars, rock spleenwort, creeping fig
and English ivy all furled and herded
into the green and cellar wet
of the bottle; well, here they are

here I am a gangling schoolgirl
in the convent library, the April evening outside,
reading the *Aeneid* as the room darkens
to the underworld of the Sixth book—

the Styx, the damned, the pity and
the improvised poetic of imprisoned meanings;
only half aware of the open weave of harbour lights
and my school blouse riding up at the sleeves.

Helen Degen Cohen

LIGHT

We live in a prison, Mirenka.
The one called Adam
said, 'We'll manage—if the world
were lit with a single candle
we would all live by *that* dim light
and the candle? would become the sun.'
But we live in a prison.
When *I'm* free I'll live by
the sun and the moon, not this
lonely beam from the outside
they call 'the light of freedom.'
Only, to escape, someone
must open the gate for me, and

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a guard guards the gate,
a giant drunken guard.
They say that sometimes
I sound like a child—but they
only huddle in the pall of this
prison light. I thought
only prisoners were unhappy, but the guards
drink and are unhappy.
They resent us and are so unhappy.
And they are afraid of us.
The Commandant himself
is a child, who never wanted this job of
running a prison, who schemes now
to save us; and he
is the saddest and dearest bad man
in the whole prison. He actually
let us see him cry. Yes he is the one
who cries. And brings us oranges and Easter eggs.
While the sick lightbulb wanes to the sound of
evening gunfire. Oh evening, the dying
of all light except for this bulb
hanging from the dead center
of the room. In tuberculin light
two black eyes sparkle
and they are the windows.
Those two views of darkness more alive
than the light we live by.

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Rachel Eytan

READING FEVER

When I was young, I came down with reading fever. Bibliomania, in scientific language. I was the Dona Juana of the bookshelf, swallowing up everything that came in reach: thick or thin, new or dog-eared, every pamphlet and catalogue, manifesto and handbill.

It wasn't so long ago that they diagnosed books and reading as a disease to be cauterized. Book-burning was common wherever this disease appeared.

The disease was common in the Tel Aviv of my childhood, judging by the long lines of youngsters that used to snake up to the basement door of Barzilai Library on Brenner Street during the heat of summer vacation. Their fevered eyes exchanged looks of studied reserve as they boasted of acquaintances like Quasimodo or the Headless Horseman.

The mark of true class distinction in that society was, "Oh, I read that a long time ago. . . . "

And for the select few who could become intoxicated on a mere dictionary, what temptation there was in the infinite possibilities of words. . . .

At the age of eleven I found myself in a place called Aunt Hasya's Children's Home, in a village outside Tel Aviv. Aunt Hasya's charges were orphans and children of soldiers off fighting the World War in Europe. I was the only "big kid." I quickly found out that Aunt Hasya, a gigantic widow who used to keep her foundlings clean with a carpet beater, regarded reading as a deadly sin, akin to sloth.

"Look at this animal always lying around and reading!" she would roar. "Go do something! Milk the goat!"

The institution was apparently supported by a skinny, humorless nanny goat that used to go out to graze every morning with the sheep of Abdallah from Kfar Jamussin. In the evenings her milk would be drawn, and then cut with fifty percent water until it turned bluish and poisonous-looking.

One evening, after it had become clear that I was inured to the carpet beater, Aunt Hasya grabbed *Les Miserables* from me and

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threw the book in the goat pen. I rushed out to find the goat chewing, page after page, with her long yellow teeth, shaking her beard with a look of disgust. When she saw me she stamped her hoof. This was my first encounter with a very particular kind of book critic: the book hater.

My advanced age gave me no extra privileges. Lights-out was at eight, after the babies had fulfilled their duties and been unhitched from their potties and placed in their iron cribs. My own duty was to fall asleep at lights-out. Wasting electricity was a crime, and the dormitory had only a tiny blue night-light attached to a doorjamb, in case of emergency or air raid. Sometimes I would spend the entire night tossing in my bed, yearning violently to read.

I soon found a ladder down to the porch. "Cling to the ladder of wisdom," wrote the medieval philosopher Abraham Ibn Ezra. And from then on, I used to stand at the top of this ladder—as soon as Suzy the baby-nurse left—night after night, wrapped in a torn army blanket from the Ottoman period, shifting a book from right to left, one line at a time, under the pale blue light.

It was there that I made my first bewildered, entranced acquaintance with Romain Rolland, Kerenin the cuckold and Pierre Bazaukhov, my eternal—but nonexclusive—love. I got my ration of contraband books from a neighbor, a kindly woman, a pharmacist with a vast library. I read until my ears rang.

My joy in this bounty continued until Suzy, a refugee from Nazi Germany, came in on an unexpected midnight visit. She shrieked as though she had seen a ghost, and the ladder began to fall, slowly, as if in a dream.

Head wounds cause heavy bleeding. To the screams of the terrified babies Aunt Hasya banished the "leetle hoodlum" to a small detention room.

It was Gabriel's room. Aunt Hasya's oldest son, Gabriel, was active in the Irgun underground and was hiding out from the British police. I found that out that first night from his diary, which I discovered stuck between some old school books. Every few weeks Gabriel would show up on a Friday, and then Aunt Hasya would make him and his sister, who had a Betty Grable hairdo, a grand Sabbath dinner on Soldiers' Dependents Fund money. Afterwards he would shut himself up in his room. The diary was written in an accountant's ledger-book, in a style that made me jealous. The moon was its one fixed hero, with heroines shifting between ellipses along

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sandy beaches or under the orange blossoms. It also had poems, lyrics and ballads full of barricades and secret bands, blood, tommy guns and vengeance.

During my three days' detention I had food—bread and goat's-milk yogurt—snuck in by Suzy, who was wracked with guilt. She had no idea how much I loved my prison.

On Friday evening, when Gabriel arrived, I mustered my courage. I showed him, out of sight of the others, a few of the poems I'd written during my detention, of which he knew nothing. They were lyrics and ballads. One of them began, "Leaves have fallen from the tree of my life, ah me!" Gabriel whisked me to his room and, locking the door behind him, produced from between the school books the diary I knew so well. He showed me a poem written a few months earlier: "Leaves have sprung free from the oak of my life, alas!"

I let myself steal a peek at his wonderful moustache, at the hair on his chest, at the tear in his eye, and forgot for a moment the stubble just beginning to sprout around my head wound.

"You and I are soul mates, little girl," he said. and then: "But the rest is not for you, not yet." And he put the diary back among the texts. He showed me how to crawl in through the window—which I already knew—so I could write my poetry undisturbed.

I had another secret stash in Gabriel's room: a suitcase full of Young People's Enemy Number One, the cheap novel. Farewell, David Copperfield, *au revoir* Anna Karenina, and hello cowboy, gangster, good-time girl! From that point on, my reading fever was virulent. I read on a fixed schedule: one mystery, one Western, one romance. When I finished the suitcase, I read it through again. And again. The ancient rabbis of blessed memory wrote, "A small organ doth man possess; that for which it hungers, sates it—yet that which sates it, only makes it hunger more." So it is with reading.

My reading introduced me to many new and weighty concepts, things like the Colt Forty-five, Wall Street, the mustang pony, the French Riviera, roulette and baccarat, caviar and champagne, the knock-out, the ten-carat diamond, and endless details of life in Budapest (since the editor of the series, Avigdor Ha-Meiri, came from Hungary). It was thus I learned that the spoken sentence must never exceed three words: "Shut your kisser!"—"Keep the change!"—"Stick 'em up!" Only weaklings think at length. The dime novel was the major literary industry in British Mandate Palestine of the 1940s. School children read then under their teacher's noses, just as

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their fathers and their fathers' fathers once hid Spinoza and Karl Marx between the folio leaves of the Talmud.

Once I learned the suitcase by heart, I found a strange transformation overtaking me. Tolstoy, Jack London and Maupassant began to repel me. After the mustangs of the Texas prairie, who had the patience for Rosinante's moods? Who could wait for page two hundred to reap what was sown on page two?

Since I had long since sworn a secret vow to the literary life, the change frightened me. I dimly perceived myself undergoing some sort of metamorphosis, of moral de-evolution. I took an oath of penitence, that I might sit once again in the chambers of the gods. It was not an easy atonement. I may have grasped back then, in some unformed fashion, that the ecology of literature must be guarded just as jealously as the greenery of the earth. Plastic trees cannot hold back the desert.

As for Gabriel himself, he was eventually arrested by the British, as he had foretold in his diary, and exiled to a prison camp in Eritrea along with a young journalist who translated dime novels for a living. Gabriel ended up as a bureaucrat with the Likud health plan, and the journalist, the last I heard, was writing speeches for a Likud politician.

I finally ran away from Aunt Hasya's institution after they caught me reading in her son's room. As far as I was concerned, hell was the place where they wouldn't let you read.

* * *

My grandfather on my mother's side was the Unknown Yiddish Author.

He wrote, but he was unread except by me. All the children of his imagination who never entered the covenant of print were left for me to read, in what the Talmud delicately calls the chamber of honor. Torn up drafts of his manuscripts were hung on a hook by the toilet in those days of paper shortages. A new chapter every day. His first drafts were like Mozart's, almost uncorrected.

It was during the austerity time of the World War. Everything went to the war effort. Most civilians used newspaper for their private needs, despite the toxic lead content in the newsprint. When millions of soldiers were eating lead at the front, who cared about a little lead poisoning from the rear? But in my grandfather's house we used his first draft manuscripts to good effect.

He used to write open-ended trilogies (Literally, "Chapter

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Eight, fun di trilogiye") on gray emergency-issue rag paper that he bought in rolls and cut up, with a bookbinder's precision, into a sort of galley sheet. When they became drafts, he cut them again, lengthwise. Then he hung them up, facing the wall. One day, by accident, I turned one of the sheets around.

From then on I used to tear paper off the hook, connect the halves and try to decode, infuriatingly slowly at first, later with the ease of a skilled cryptologist, those pages of flowing, elegant, almost medieval script. He wrote in Yiddish, the daily language of European Jewry. But it was not the gut-churning, plebeian tongue I heard spoken around me. I didn't know then that there were giants of Yiddish literature living—or in the process of dying at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators. Not for them the green pastures of the land of Israel. The zeal of negation of the diaspora negated them too, they who first broke down the walls of the ghetto.

My grandfather never broke out of the ghetto. He brought it with him to the promised land. He was one of the founders of the first preserved shtetl in the Middle East, the religious city of Bnai Brak (Boiberik, the satirists called it). An orthodox Jew of the modernist Mizrahi wing, a consummate bourgeois of slight build, he used to promenade through the streets of the settlement winter and summer in a brushed three-piece suit, worn over his ritual fringes, with a Dickensian slouch hat atop his skullcap. A watch chain stretched across his unfashionably gaunt midsection. His beard and moustache, which he trimmed himself, were the color of rust, and his earlocks were tucked behind his ears. Thus he would sit, in his place of honor near the eastern wall of the great synagogue on Rabbi Akiva Street.

Every afternoon at four, in the tiny apartment crammed with half the furniture of Lodz along with assorted daughters and grandchildren, the flotsam of failed marriages and foreign wars who invaded the hallways and kitchen on folding cots, he would dismiss his heirs with a cantankerous wave from the parlor. "Turning into a kibbutz," he said.

Afterwards he would sit upright at his glass-topped desk, amid his sharpened pencils, his fountain pens, the glue he made to his own recipe, and his cigarettes neatly cut into thirds. I watched through the blinds as he twirled his moustache, picked up his tweezers and wiped off his fountain pen on his black skullcap—either to remove the old ink or to prime his creativity. From then on he proceeded ceaselessly, like a man mesmerized, to fill his stacks of galley paper with that medieval script.

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He would copy the chapter, from beginning to end, on prewar paper. After three hours or so, he would go out to hang the shreds of the first draft for the masses to enjoy. It reminded me of the white sugar he used to ration out for our tea, chipped from a great cone that was wrapped in purple paper. He got the sugar from a British military contractor and kept it hidden away in a locked drawer—along with the final drafts.

As soon as he left, I would go in and read the next chapter. At first I thought old Marshall Pilsudski (as we called my grandfather behind his back) was doing the rent accounts for his heart-breaking tenants, who were always slinking past us in the hallway, hat in hand, begging for an extension. That was until the day I happened to turn a page. In a house where clothes for women and girls were made from his old suits, where conversations revolved around eternal mortgages, accursed ration clerks and conscripted husbands, this mute author sat and wrote awesome, wondrous tales that were still only a gleam in Isaac Bashevis Singer's eye.

By guessing at ellipses and connections, I pieced together knights on horseback, high-breasted Polish princesses, duels of honor and threats of suicide, temptations and seductions, vows of forbidden love, curses carried through generations, acts of the devil and a lot of dot-dot-dot. I would fly on the wings of darkness and dot-dot-dot to the towers of Zakopana, who burned with love—and not for old men, either—in enchanted forests of primeval snow. There was nothing there about rabbis, or yeshiva students, or modest women. Nothing about what Hitler was doing to Poland.

It lasted until some impatient soul would bang on the door, yell, "What are you doing in there?" and bring me back to earth with an earthy Yiddish curse. I would quickly hang the chapter back up—face to the wall—and sneak out feeling dizzy and full of guilt.

My grandmother, whose traditional second soul—the Sabbath soul of the Jew—appeared to have been left in Poland, was offended by what she called his "book-smearing" and his reclusiveness, even more than she was offended when he hissed "Sha—sha" before he tuned in the Saturday war news in violation of the Sabbath, gluing his ear to the radio "so the neighbors shouldn't hear (the neighbors in fact considered it life-saving, and so beyond the laws of Sabbath) or when he moved his little flags around on the map of the European theater above his desk that no one was allowed to touch.

My grandfather was an isolationist, at least when it came to people. And he was sarcastic. And he piously refrained from talking overmuch with the weaker sex.

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One day I was poking unbidden through the bookcase in my grandparents' bedroom. And there, jammed in behind the Rabbinic Code of Law—which I had already read to find the details of grown-up bliss that awaited me in the arms of a pious man—I found the poetry of Rachel, one of the most passionate and sensuous of the early modern Hebrew poets.

I don't know when my grandfather came in the room. I saw his tiny, shiny shoes next to my knee. I slammed the book shut. Irreligious though I was, I was well aware of the popular saying, "One should burn the Torah before giving it to women." I tried to push Rachel back to her hiding place. My grandfather stopped me, opened the book and casually—almost offhandedly—gestured for me to continue.

From that day on I was sure that he hung those backwards first drafts, in his convoluted manner, for me—the irreligious child, the rebel, drowned in her reading, writing and plagiarized poems full of dot-dot-dot, that she might read his private diary, the longing journeys of his fiery mind to some autonomous kingdom in the Tatra mountains.

It seems I was his only reader.

* * *

We are the last generation of literature, Saul Bellow once said.

My students, who come to college in sports cars and Calvin Klein jeans—or plan to do so soon—ask me quite frankly: Reading professional literature is essential, but why do we need to know Madame Bovary in order to achieve the American dream? I recently heard a child complaining to his mother that he was the only kid in his class who gave books as birthday gifts. In New York I find myself meeting more and more people who apologize to me that they don't read good literature, as though I were an ice-cream maker and they were on a diet.

"Words, words, words," Hamlet replied to the pragmatic Polonius—he who declaimed before his son Laertes the famous farewell on "how to succeed in business and Elizabethan society."

Poetry, like life itself, is impractical. There was a time when even God himself was an author, looking in the Torah he had written and creating the world. This and more: "Golem"—lump of clay—God said to man. "That which your eyes have beheld is written in your book, the book of the generation of man." Which is to

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say, Creature, the minute you have a book bigger than you are, you have become human.

Book burners burn more than books. They burn bridges to the past, to the "years of many generations," to the understanding and the collective subconscious of what we call civilization. Yet it seems as though burning may soon be superfluous. Will we voluntarily abandon our experience in favor of ready-to-wear imagery, of fabricated mythologies, of a shallow, one-dimensional existence that has no layers of culture, no subtleties, no miracle of poetry? There are those who truly hope that, just as tuberculosis and syphilis have been eliminated through antibiotics, so television and video may soon relegate reading fever to the dustbin of history.

Are we the last generation of scribblers? Not yet, fellow patient, not yet: Here and there we still meet the odd few who suffer from the craving, who perk up when they walk into a bookstore, their nostrils quivering at the smell of their timeless aphrodisiac.

Translated from the Hebrew by Jonathan J. Goldberg

Coming in

Partisan Review

- An Inteview with Czeslaw Milosz
- William Phillips on Allan Bloom
- Vassily Aksyonov on *Glasnost*
- Raymond Aron: *A Memoir*
- Pearl K. Bell on Kate Chopin and Sarah Orne Jewett
- An Inteview with Stephen Spender
- Edith Kurzweil on Everyday Life Under Hitler
- Fiction by José Donoso
- George Watson on Orwell and Waugh
- Nathan Glazer on Life in the Bronx
- Eugene Goodheart on Desire and Its Discontents
- Steven Marcus on Ernest Hemingway

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James E. Young

ANTI-WAR POETRY IN ISRAEL

Of the centuries of historical archetypes for suffering accumulated in Hebrew, those generated during the period of the Holocaust have begun to overwhelm all others. Even the names for this era in Hebrew and Yiddish, *Sho'ah* and *Churbn*, which previously designated other catastrophes, are in themselves now reinformed by the last and greatest disaster. Due partly to the sheer enormity of events, partly to the great proportion of Holocaust survivors in Israel (nearly half the population in 1948), and partly to the central place of the Holocaust in Zionist ideology, images and figures from the *Sho'ah* have all but displaced their historical precedents. Not only has the *Sho'ah* begun to represent retroactively all pre-Holocaust catastrophes—lending them a significance they would not otherwise have had—but it has also become the standard in Jewish literature by which all kinds of post-Holocaust calamities, Jewish or not, are now measured. Thus, whether Israeli writers turn around to represent other victims' suffering or their own, their remembrance of past suffering necessarily informs both their language and figures. In the reflections on Arab-Israeli wars by soldiers and in recent poems and plays by Tzvi Atzmon, Efraim Sidon, Dalia Ravikovitch, Natan Zach, Alex Lee, and Hanoch Levine, among others, it is rarely a matter of the soldier-poets finding concrete historical correspondences between their Arab enemies and the Nazis, or between Palestinians and Jews. Rather, these Israeli writers draw automatically from their own lexicon of suffering to represent the present.

In reflections of writers and soldiers at Kibbutz Ein Ha-horesh after the Six Day War in 1967, Israelis explored the extremely complicated relationship between collective Holocaust memory, their reasons for fighting in the War, and their understanding of the enemy. Twenty-two years after World War II, their proud Zionist education notwithstanding, Israeli soldiers came inevitably to see themselves as little more than another generation of Jews on the brink of a second great massacre—and responded in battle as if the life of an entire people depended on every firefight. As Muki Tzur describes waiting for the beginning of this war, in fact, it grows clear that his inherited memory of the Holocaust constituted his primary reason for fighting, the impetus driving him and his comrades—all

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now identifying figuratively with the generation of survivors preceding them:

> We tend to forget those days before the war, and perhaps rightly so—yet those were the days in which we came closest to that Jewish fate from which we have run like haunted beings all these years. Suddenly everyone was talking about Munich, about the holocaust, about the Jewish people being left to its own fate.[1]

Questioned later by a slightly incredulous Abba Kovner, who led the Vilna partisans during the Holocaust and came to Israel with the Zionist belief that by definition, Israel made the possibility of another Holocaust "unthinkable," another soldier revealed that not only was it thinkable, but it was in fact the *governing* thought underlying his very *raison d'être* as a soldier:

> It's true that people believed that we would be exterminated if we lost the war. They were afraid. We got this idea—or inherited it—from the concentration camps. It's a concrete idea for anyone who has grown up in Israel, even if he personally didn't experience Hitler's persecution, but only heard or read about it.
> . . . Did you really get the feeling that extermination could happen here? [asks Kovner].
> . . . Yes, certainly. I think it's an idea that everyone in Israel lived with.

This is the great irony of the Israelis' grasp of their predicament. On the one hand, only a people fighting another Holocaust will survive with Israel's tenacity. On the other hand, the *sabra* has been educated to believe that Israel is the only safe haven for Jews in the world, the only guarantee against another Jewish Holocaust, and that the "holocausts" happen only in the Diaspora. Thus, the soldier is compelled to fight by the memory of what happened in the Diaspora, precisely and paradoxically because it could also happen in Israel. But this is not the only paradox. Of more serious consequence is that expressed by Muki Tzur at the end of his opening meditation:

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1. *The Seventh Day: Soldiers' Talk About the Six-Day War,* recorded and edited by a group of young Kibbutz members. Middlesex. Penguin Books, 1971, p. 38.

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> We know the meaning of genocide, both those of us who saw the holocaust and those who were born later. Perhaps this is why the world will never understand us, will never understand our courage, or comprehend the doubts and the qualms of conscience we knew during and after the war. Those who survived the holocaust, those who see pictures of a father and a mother, who hear the cries that disturb the dreams of those close to them, those who have listened to stories—know that no other people carries with it such haunting visions. *And it is these visions which compel us to fight and yet make us ashamed of our fighting.* . . . [my emphasis] . . . We carry in our hearts an oath which binds us never to return to the Europe of the holocaust; but at the same time we do not wish to lose that Jewish sense of identity with the victims.

This movement between past and present persecution, between the compulsion to fight and the shame of fighting, exemplifies Israel's own ambivalent need to remember the Holocaust and to forget it: it is simultaneously the reason for the Jews' life in Israel—for the state itself—and that which incites empathy in them for their new, defeated enemies. The consequences of these figures can only be speculated upon: at what point does this memory, and the subsequent empathy it generates for a defeated enemy weaken the resolve to fight further, and at what point does it make Israel stronger? Always struggling with this dilemma, Israel found in 1982 a renewed tension in it, represented now by her soldier-poets in their anti-war poetry.

Thus, when Prime Minister Menachem Begin responded to a reporter's questions about Israel's bombing of Beirut, he reflexively asked, "And if Hitler himself was hiding in a building with twenty innocent citizens, you still wouldn't bomb the building?" The Prime Minister was immediately challenged by Holocaust historians Yehuda Bauer and Ze'ev Mankowitz and by novelist Amos Oz, among others, who answered, "No, Mr. Prime Minister, your example is not an equivalent. . . . "[2] In fact, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the anti-war poetry flowing from Lebanon during and

2. Amos Oz, "Hitler kvar met, adoni rosh ha-memshala" [Hitler is Already Dead, Mr. Prime Minister], in *Chatziat Gevul: Shirim Mimilchemet Lebanon* [Border Crossing: Poems from the Lebanon War] Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1983, p. 71, in Hebrew. This translation as well as others from the Hebrew are mine unless noted otherwise.

Also see Yehuda Bauer, "Fruits of Fear," *Jerusalem Post*, 3 June 1982, p. 8; and Ze'ev Mankowitz, "Beirut is not Berlin," *Jerusalem Post*, 4 August 1982, p. 8.

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after the war was precisely this repudiation of Holocaust imagery as justification for the war, even as the poets simultaneously embraced such imagery as the primary means for representing victims of this war—especially the children.

During this protracted war and even after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, poetry and essays, handbills and posters thus appeared throughout Israel responding to the war with both explicit and oblique references to the Holocaust. Two collections, in particular, *Border Crossing: Poems from the Lebanon War* and *Fighting and Killing without End: Political Poetry in the Lebanon War*,[3] illustrate the sheer impossibility of representing or reading about contemporary destruction and suffering without recourse to both the most traditional figures in the liturgy as well as to those more recently acquired during the Holocaust. But as dominant as the Holocaust had been before 1982 as an image of survival, it was now handled ironically in reference to the Israelis' situation in Lebanon. For the first time, Jewish suffering was not the principal object of Israel's war poetry. Instead of recalling traditional Jewish archetypes to represent the deaths of Israeli soldiers or the condition of bereaved families at home, Israel's poets used such imagery more often than not to depict the death and suffering of others, especially that of Arab children. The Holocaust was now being used not as an image for Jewish suffering, but as an anti-trope for it.

In a poem that was distributed widely during the war, Efraim Sidon thus conjures remembrance of the Holocaust explicitly to discard it as justification for the war in Lebanon. He begins with a mock pronouncement of guilt on the heads of the children for their own fate:

> I accuse the children in Sidon and Tyre
> Whose numbers are still uncounted
> Three-year olds, seven-year olds, and others of all ages,
> Of the crime of residing in the vicinity of terrorists.
> If you hadn't lived near them, children,
> You could have been students today.
> Now you will be punished.
>
> (from *Fighting and Killing*)

3. *Ve'eyn tichla lakeravot velahereg: Shirah polititt bemilchemet Levanon* [Fighting and Killing without End: Political Poetry in the Lebanon War], edited with an Afterword by Hannan Hever and Moshe Ron. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uchad, 1984.

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He then continues by accusing the women and mothers who lived near the terrorists, as well as the houses that sheltered terrorists, and ends by blaming everyone in Lebanon for the Holocaust itself, for which all there will be punished:

> I accuse the residents of Lebanon—all of them.
> For the Nazis' mistreatment of us in the World War.
> Because in every generation, one must see himself
> As if he were destroying Hitler
> Always, always
> And that is what Begin is doing.
>
> I accuse you all!
> Naturally.
> Because I am always, always the victim.

By literalizing the figure of the Holocaust here, stretching the linkage to the Holocaust as argument for the war to its breaking point, the poet seeks to invalidate this figure as a basis for military action.

Just before their afterward to *Fighting and Killing without End*, the editors have reproduced a poster in which Chaim Nachman Bialik's "Upon the Slaughter" is printed in Arabic and Hebrew, side by side, overlaid on an Israeli map of Beirut. In this graphic way, the poster forces the reader quite literally to read the map of Sabra and Shatilla between and through the lines of Bialik, the national poet. It also literally re-figures Jewish experience in Arabic, with its own pool of references, allusions, and tropes—even as it incorporates into Bialik's lines the suffering of Palestinians. For once "Upon the Slaughter" is used to represent another pain (as it was by writers in the Vilna and Warsaw ghettos), it not only organizes the pain of others, but also absorbs—and thereby remembers—it, as well.

As the greatest test for Abraham's faith had been his aborted sacrifice of Isaac, the least bearable kind of suffering in Jewish tradition seems always to have been that of children. Almost every figurative allusion to the Holocaust in recent Israeli anti-war poetry begins with an image of suffering children. At some level, it seems to have been just this unprecedented prospect of having both to fight children and find them massacred in Sabra and Shatilla that broke Israel's resolve in this war and turned so many soldiers against it. For we find once again that even as the memory of Jewish children murdered in the Holocaust compelled Israelis to fight, it seems also to have paralyzed them as soldiers sympathetic to suffering children.

Thus, Tzvi Atzmon recites one Jewish calamity after another

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in his poem "Yizkor" before ending the litany with slaughtered Arab children. Although the *Yizkor* blessing is recited on neither of the ritual days of remembrance (*Yom Hasho'ah* and *Tisha Be'av*) recalling national catastrophes, it has come through custom to be associated with the dead of the Holocaust, primarily as an engraved icon on Holocaust memorials and monuments. *Yizkor* ([God] will remember) and *Zachor* (Remember!) have both become liturgical words for remembering not just the dead, but by extension the era and circumstances in which loved ones have died. In his poetic transfiguration of the *Yizkor* blessing, Tzvi Atzmon expands this latter sense to include not the individual names of deceased loved ones (as would be the tradition), but the larger, collective death of a people—and then it's not just to remember the dead, or even that they have died, but specifically how they died.

> In Eretz Israel arose the Jewish people
> Who were dispersed . . .
> Pursued and tortured and sold into slavery, and expelled
> from France, Portugal, from England . . .
> Raped, beaten, sacrificed . . . , drowned . . .
> Murdered in broad daylight, in the crusades, in the black
> plague, in the revolutions of the cossacks, and in the
> darkness of the inquisition.
> Kidnapped, incarcerated, massacred, stoned
> And defiled in pogroms, and cursed for murdering God
> And for drinking children's blood.

And then, it is the death of children—the point of departure for the other poets—that stops the poet's voice, which makes him recall here again Bialik's lines, "Vengeance for the spilt blood of a child,/ the devil has not yet compiled." He catches himself, stutters and repeats:

> And the revenge upon every small child will cry out.
> And suddenly
> He wakes up in the morning, sees
> He wakes up in the morning, sees
> Children who were shot when the sun rose
> And real blood, it's not just a libel.
> Arab children, without pity.

The murdered children simultaneously oppress the poet and inspire him to remember them in the *Yizkor* prayer. That they are killed by

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Christians may, in fact, only exacerbate the figure's memory of traditional anti-Jewish persecution. But this is real blood, not a blood libel as it had been traditionally and as Begin had described the accusations against Israel, and these were real Arab babies now slaughtered.

Of the many references to children, the most haunting and explicit come in the poems of Dalia Ravikovitch. Although Ravikovitch does not explicitly refer to the Holocaust, it remains difficult to read three of her poems, in particular, without the associations created for us by the Holocaust. In "Exit from Beirut," the speaker commands the refugees to:

> Take the rucksacks
> And the household bric-a-brac
> And the books of the Koran
> . . .
> And the children scurrying like chickens in the village.

At which point, she interjects:

> How many children do you have?
> How many children did you have?
> It's hard to watch over kids in a situation like this.
> . . .
> Put into sacks whatever isn't fragile,
> Clothes and blankets and bedding
> And something as a souvenir
> Perhaps a shiny artillery shell
> Or any utensil that comes in handy
> And the rheumy-eyed babies
> And the R.P.G. kids.

And then in a language that is both forever corrupted by its application to the Jews in Nazi Germany and laden with Jewish memory of expulsion with no known destination, the poet simultaneously recalls and creates a new "voyage of the damned," leaving little doubt as to the source of her figures:

> We want to see you sail in the water, sail aimlessly
> Not to any harbor or shore
> They will not receive you anywhere
> You are banished human beings
> You are people who don't count

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You are people who are superfluous
You are nothing but a handful of lice
Stinging and itching
To madness.

Speaking on behalf of all Israelis in this ironic inversion, the poet would thus avenge the Jews' past suffering by condemning their present enemy-refugees to suffer *as* Jews.

Finally, in "One Cannot Kill a Baby Twice," Ravikovitch overlays imagery drawn almost directly from Bialik with language infused by the Holocaust; and again, children provide both the essential locus of horror and motivation for the poem:

Upon sewage puddles in Sabra and Shatilla
There you transferred masses of people
Great masses
From the world of the living to the world of the dead.

Night after night.
First they shot
After that they hung
Finally they slaughtered with knives.
Terrified women appeared in haste
Above a dust hillock:
"There they slaughter us,
In Shatilla."

A delicate tail of a new moon was hung
Above the camps.
Our soldiers illuminated the place with flares
Like daylight.
"Return to the camp, march!" the soldier commanded
The screaming women from Sabra and Shatilla.
He had orders to follow.
And the children were already laid in filthy puddles
Their mouths wide open
Calm.
Nobody will hurt them anymore.
One cannot kill a baby twice. . . .

The soldiers are only "following orders," and it happens if not in broad daylight, then beneath the light of the soldiers' own flares. One cannot kill a baby twice, it turns out, except in memory and its resonance in contemporary experiences; in this way, the children in

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Bialik's poem and those remembered from the Holocaust die again and again in every subsequent child's murder.

Occasionally, references seem to come only in the reader's own specific knowledge of events, in projections of Holocaust memory onto more general suffering. But in fact, it is partly in memory of events that analogy and metaphor are created in the first place; an expression like "we didn't see and we didn't know" is so burdened with past violence, for example, that it becomes impossible to recite it innocently in Israel: it can only be repeated ironically.

To this day, it seems that the rest of the world has confused genuine Israeli empathy for the victims of the Sabra and Shatilla massacres with culpability in the killing itself. When 400,000 Israelis marched in Tel Aviv to protest the killings, the world mistook a profound expression of sympathy for the victims and outrage at the killers for a demonstration of guilt. In its craving for the facile symmetry of persecuted turned persecutor, the world seems to have ignored the capacity of one people to feel—if only figuratively—the pain of another. The world has not understood that an outpouring of grief like this might have been spawned as much by the memory of past Jewish suffering as it was by the massacre itself of Palestinians by Christians.

For memory of the past is not merely passed down *mi dor le dor*—from generation to generation—but it is necessarily regenerated in the images that transport it from one era to the next. The past is thus recalled in present figures no less than contemporary events are experienced in light of past events. In this exchange between past and present, every generation simultaneously inherits and transmits memory—which now becomes in itself a series of analogues linking events to one another. Rather than attempting to legislate the inevitable framing of present crises in the figures of the past, we might recognize that historical memory itself may be invigorated by this framing. Reimagining contemporary and past historical crises—each in terms of the other—may ultimately be the only way we remember them.

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VARIETY

Edith Kurzweil

THE FREUDIANS MEET IN MONTREAL

If Freud is dead, as so many claim, the psychoanalysts apparently have not been notified. As over fifteen hundred of them, from all over the world, arrived with their spouses in Montreal at the end of July for the Thirty-fifth International Psychoanalytic Congress, they discussed the many issues Freud had dealt with in one of his last clinical papers, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. While some of the contributors thought that in this essay Freud had flagged *all* of the problems analysts still have not solved, and others pinpointed where they believed he had been too pessimistic, they agreed that psychoanalysis is alive and thriving.

At their previous meeting in Hamburg two years ago, the analysts gathered in Germany for the first time since Freud had been expelled, and the topic had to do with the Nazi past and how to come to terms with it. The atmosphere was full of emotional turmoil. But in Montreal, the Paris of North America—with its abundance of first-rate restaurants and other tourist attractions—both the locale and the topic of the meeting set the tone for a mellow and amiable mood. Even the business meeting, I was told, went off without too many clashes, in spite of the fact that the IPA adopted a bevy of new amendments to its constitution and bylaws. Essentially, a good deal of power was shifted from the American and European associations to the Latin and South American ones. For there, psychoanalysis is a growth industry. Thus it seemed only fair to rotate the presidency between the three continents, and to allocate three vice presidents to each of them as well. Even the resolution to admit American societies whose members have no medical degrees, and thus do not belong to the American Psychoanalytic Association, was passed without a hitch. (A number of clinical psychologists have sued the IPA, the APA, and a few others for restraint of trade.) These societies now may apply for acceptance and will be evaluated by customary IPA standards.

At this meeting, I was struck once again by the dissonance be-

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tween what most outsiders think the Freudians talk about and the actual issues they address. Even when discussing such relatively routine topics as "One Psychoanalysis Or Many," "The Constitutional Aspects of Dreams," or "Empirical Research on Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy," they automatically speak of representations of realities and the unconscious content and meaning of fantasies rather than addressing what meets the eye. In fact, they discard more or less obvious interpretations of the thoughts patients bring to them and search for hidden, unconscious trauma and defenses. And since they heal with words rather than medications, many of the contributions began by criticizing the official translation of *Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse* as *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. This rendering, some held, lends a pejorative twist: "Analysis Finite and Infinite" or "The Ending and Unending Analyses" might have been more appropriate.

In the session on history, the Viennese Harald Leupold-Löwenthal, for instance, demonstrated that the German words *endlich* and *unendlich* have connotations that are lost in English translations and in French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese ones as well—in such words as *terminable, terminée* and *interminable*. For not only Freud but every student in the German literary and philosophical tradition is familiar with Goethe's couplet:

> *Willst du ins Unendliche schreiten,*
> *Geh' nur im Endlichen nach allen Seiten.*
> [If thou wilt step into the infinite,
> Just explore every path in the finite.]

In the context of Freud's original paper, Leupold-Löwenthal explained, both the analyst's and the patient's analyses ultimately become infinite tasks instead of finite ones. Freud meant that it may be a good idea for the analyst to undergo a re-analysis every five years, and he had not talked about the termination or terminability of a specific analysis. In fact, in 1937, Freud came out for "lengthy" analyses in order to differentiate himself from Otto Rank—who had suggested that analyzing the birth trauma might recover unconscious mechanisms within four months.

James Strachey, Freud's official translator, was faulted by Alex Holder for not having used Freud's annotations and notes from his original manuscripts. Thus Holder recommended an entirely new translation to account for Freud's "polyphony." It might even be bet-

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ter, he felt, to use the original German words in English, so that one could get away from, for instance, "cathexis" for *Besetzung*, or resorting to other inexact words, such as "occupation," "investment," or "retention"—which have their own inappropriate connotations. Alas, said Peter Hoffer, "Translations are like women: when they are beautiful they are not faithful and when they are faithful they are not beautiful."

This *Versagung der Übersetzung* was lamented by Jean Laplanche, the coauthor with J.B. Pontalis of the *Dictionnaire de la Psychanalyse* (1967). He maintained that translations must push further and further beyond Strachey's. Rather than work with the countermodel the French have constructed, Laplanche proposed a "Freudian French"—a language of Freudian neologisms that move from the concrete to the most abstract, from line to paper to the work as a whole.

The first plenary session, called "The Constitutional Aspects of Drives," was moderated by another Frenchman, Pierre Marty, the foremost authority on psychosomatics. Here, Robert Emde of Denver held that findings in developmental psychobiology—observations of changes in genes or of hereditary influences—might provide clues to transformations in psychic structures. Presenting a welter of information, from research on eye movements, to psychological attachment, to genetic risk, he outlined how such knowledge might be integrated with affective monitoring before the age of six months and with social referencing after that. Marty was skeptical and much more attuned to the next speaker, Paul Lefebvre of Montreal. Lefebvre presented the case of a woman with intensely narcissistic tendencies: she had an attack of ulcerative colitis whenever two of her central unconscious fantasies came into conflict. And the ups and downs of her fantasies (which she created as a defense against depression) were found to limit her capacity for change.

Freud addressed such limits in *Die endliche und die unendliche Analyse*. His successors passionately disputed how far they had progressed since then, either with the help of structural theory developed after 1923 or by having retained parts of the earlier topographical theory (unconscious, conscious, and preconscious). But they all work, as Peter Loewenberg summarized, within the psychoanalytic dyad, by regressing to the mother-infant conditions. Analyst and analysand form a working alliance in which the observing ego of both interpret resistances and patterns of defense in the analysand. Together, they create a rich, complex, unique and textured nar-

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rative that is the analysand's life: traumas, associations, fantasies, fears, ideals, hopes, and aspirations. In the process the analyst, too, endlessly learns and grows.

Such growth was demonstrated in the many case presentations, where specific theoretical approaches were mirrored in analytic technique and in the handling of transference and countertransference. Iza Ehrlich, for instance, related some of the unconscious material which came up with a patient after she announced that she was going to take an extended leave from her practice in six months. The patient's anger was expressed in endless fantasies about the analyst, whom she transformed in turn into a former Nazi youth and a Jehovah's Witness. Ehrlich described how her forthcoming absence brought out some of the troublesome, unconscious neurotic adjustments in the patient and how upon her return the patient had become more remote from her—and insisted that she no longer needed her analyst.

Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, before an upcoming separation, was told by one of *her* patients: "You have no sexual life, you are too old." This immediate, negative transference soon brought up previously hidden trauma and explained much else about this patient who "seemingly" was suffering from perverse sexuality. By focusing on the connections between aggressiveness and sexuality and between sexuality and narcissism, said Chasseguet-Smirgel, the patient could recover affective links to a mother who was competitive with her infant daughter, to early sexualization, and to "sexual triumph over her mother." She had constructed a fantasy of Apocalypse to incorporate into her psyche the hate of the primal scene she had witnessed as a child. By getting back to the reality she had had to destroy, this patient's analysis ultimately was "terminable."

The last plenary session, chaired by Jacob Arlow, a doyen of the New York Psychoanalytic Association, centered on issues of techniques—the glue of *all* clinical theories. Dale Boesky, of Michigan, pointed to the consequences of abstract theories on techniques and to the impact of different levels of abstraction, from clinical to philosophical—which Robert Waelder postulated over twenty-five years ago. Boesky, however, detailed the ways in which concepts help the analyst guide his patient in altering neurotic behavior by changing pathological character structures, reducing the need for punishment, and increasing the ability to experience pleasure. And he reminded his listeners, on a less upbeat note, that in 1924 Freud was still speaking of cure through the resolution of the Oedipus complex, while by 1937 he expected only to strengthen the ego. Anne-

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Marie Sandler, of London, then demonstrated how such a change had led one of her patients to feel more comfortable with her internal fantasies and to live more fully. Chasseguet-Smirgel, though appreciative, thought Sandler had neglected the presence of the father, who "always is in there."

A different type of discussion went on among those who continued to pursue the Hamburg Congress's theme, "The Effects of the Holocaust on the Second Generation." A Berlin analyst, Gertrud Hardtmann, talked of X, a female Jewish patient born in 1954, whose grandparents and mother had survived a concentration camp, who was traumatized by her family's past, and who went into treatment because she was abusing her ten-year-old daughter. Although she knew little about the Nazi period, X seemingly had internalized her grandfather's submissiveness and her mother's overadaptation, and their view of X as "the ideal embodiment of the grandmother's sister who had been assassinated by the Nazis." And because this past had led them all to put hopes and expectations onto X which she could not possibly live up to, she turned her secret anger and fury back upon herself. Thus one part of her was overly friendly and the other overly aggressive. As she came to identify with her analyst, this split was said to have been repaired.

Ilany Kogan, from Jerusalem, painted a less rosy picture of her suicidal patient who, however, had made enormous strides. Kay had started to reveal her shattered self by means of bodily sensations, then had communicated with the analyst through drawings, until she finally started to use words. She had grown up in a home brimming with silence, hiding her parents' concentration camp past, the effect of her father's castration at the hands of the Nazis, and of the terror and violence. Kogan described Kay's analytic experience as a "second skin," holding together different aspects of the personality—an experience that will have to continue for a long time to come.

Discussants of the two papers, led by Judith Kestenberg from New York, questioned whether Hardtmann's patient really could live as happily ever after as she had reported. And they looked for common denominators among children of survivors—given the unique circumstance under which their families had escaped death and the adjustments required of such children. For all studies have shown that every survivor's child is required to live its own life and yet must serve as the link to its parents' past—whether in Germany, Israel, or elsewhere.

Starting from a broader perspective, the German analyst Lud-

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wig Haesler talked of his countrymen's "projective defenses," which at first were expressed by never speaking of the unspeakable past and more recently by admonitions to speak about it. He asserted that Auschwitz, the crime beyond any example in history, must continue to be dealt with by analyzing the persecutory phenomena, along with all the interpretations and pseudo-interpretations. That task, he asserted, requires *unendliche Analyse*: both perpetrators and victims are victims of this past.

The Argentinian Moises Kijak recounted the history leading up to Auschwitz to refute those analysts who, according to him, have themselves developed defensive countertransferential responses when treating concentration camp survivors, and thus have misunderstood these patients' accounts. And he refuted theses about the victims' participation in their own destruction and explanations of survival as due to "good internal objects" rather than "fortuitous external circumstances." In this he agreed with Mortimer Ostow, who, once again, gave a passionate, historical account of anti-Semitism as the most important reason why Jews and Germans are bound to have problems when trying to come together. But Ostow ended on a hopeful note, reminding us that Germany is the first country ever to have accepted responsibility for its anti-Semitism by passing restitution laws.

Leon Grinberg of Madrid introduced the panel on "Analytic Understanding of Mass Psychology and Ideology" by stating that ideology—as both a form of knowledge and of concealment—has changed since Freud wrote about it, because of the increase in violence, wars, terrorism, drugs, and the threat of nuclear war. A deeper, psychoanalytic understanding, he urged, is called for. Vann Spruill of New Orleans, after telling the audience that the breakdown of rules and folk wisdom has allowed for the spread of cults, for massive deviance, and for shared beliefs expressed in slogans, urged psychoanalysts to add their special expertise to the anthropologists' and sociologists' analyses of ideology. Because crowds accept presented data at face value, he concluded, they must be exposed to the voice of the intellect, as Freud admonished.

Frederick Wyatt of Freiburg went on to address the fact that ideologies are not verifiable; they are based on *Weltanschauungen*—although rooted in the superego. Speaking of young adult patients, he distinguished between those who are close to ideology by having made use of current opinions, and those who absorb ideology into their ego structure and thus become as "impenetrable as a glass

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wall." Theoretically, Wyatt found, ideology combines highly subjective, defensive needs with relatively impersonal, sometimes highly abstract ideas—which may result in the disappearance of neurotic and existential anxiety and confusion. So the secret motives for embracing ideology, stated Wyatt, cannot be easily discerned in the new synthesis of person and ideology. But he found that the need to renew this synthesis over and over again leads to increasing activism, to externalization and militance, and finally to growing alienation from one's own inner world.

When I attended the meeting of the International Psychoanalysts Against Nuclear Weapons I asked myself whether Wyatt had thought of them when writing his paper. For these highly respected analysts were repeating the information and slogans distributed by the many professional organizations set up to oppose nuclear war. The chairman, John Sloane of Montreal, called the unconscious forces Freudians try to uncover the "crucial deterrents to what we call the arms race." Just as the paternal father is able to survive the child's hatred, he thought, so nations may be learning to do this for one another. Eero Rechardt of Helsinki rehashed all the arguments against deterrence and called for negotiations by the Reagan Administration, apparently unaware that these have been going on for some time. He was correct, of course, in stating that we have no conceptual tools to grasp the potential destructiveness of a nuclear explosion, although it seems somewhat politically inappropriate to assume, as he did, that the nuclear threat is caused by the United States planning a first strike—"because it fantasizes the U.S.S.R." as the aggressor. Moses Laufer of London blamed the power that secrecy bestows on those in authority for the terror. Scientists and political leaders work intimately with each other, he maintained, and the rarefied atmosphere and intimacy of their work strengthen the power of their illness (a need to hold on to the childhood omnipotence), so that they are unable to evaluate the consequences of their judgements. His discussant, Howard Levine of Boston, talked of his own workshops on "the nuclear threat," where he focuses on the participants' denial of helplessness and powerlessness, and on the links between unconscious identification with the omnipotence of nuclear weapons.

No one, of course, would disagree with the aims of the organization or would deny the horror of a potential nuclear war. But it seems to me that such psychologizing about the means to achieve peace seems to follow the ebb and flow of the movement rather than

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lead it. In fact, the Psychoanalysts Against Nuclear Weapons organized in Hamburg long after other professions had done so, and in Montreal they were given meeting space at the Congress Center. Yet no more than two hundred people attended, which seems to indicate that the analysts too have been less interested in the peace movement now that negotiations are in progress, and that it has lost its impetus or maybe even its *raison d'être*. (Almost as many came to see Lynn Lehrman-Weiner's home movie on Freud and the disciples, which Alain de Mijolla introduced.) Like Freud's contemporaries who were convinced by his ideas because they already held them, so today's analysts who already believe in disarmament emphasize the danger of annihilation, while those who believe in deterrence point out that it has worked over the last forty years. In other words, psychoanalysts can legitimate their ideology as well as any other profession.

This is not to say that research into the unconscious, ultimately, may not provide the tools for better ways of understanding human aggression, or that many of the simpler psychotherapies that deny their descent from Freud use his insights into the unconscious. So far, however, we know only that some analyses are terminable while others are not, and that long after Freud's death psychoanalysis is alive—high on the hog in South America and suffering from middle age in North America.

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BOOKS

EDUCATING THE EDUCATORS

PROFESSING LITERATURE: AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY.
By Gerald Graff. The University of Chicago Press. $24.95.

Education has been the object of endless discussion by professional educators, teachers, students, politicians, and pressure groups. (The major—and perennial—questions have concerned the general purpose of a college education, the relation of faculty to students, the curriculum, and the proper methods of teaching.) The teaching of literature as a subordinate question also has received attention by teachers, literary critics, and professional organizations, such as the Modern Language Association.

To my knowledge, nobody has come up with the right answers. In fact, the discussions and debates have usually been full of moral and political pieties, professional biases, vested interests, and an almost systematic evasion of the more touchy issues. Even Secretary of Education William Bennett, who is surely correct in faulting higher education for watering down its curriculum, goes off into time-worn homilies about instilling the proper values in students, without considering the political pressures on universities and the source of the decline of education in American society. Here and there, we hear vague references to society as a whole, but we do not like to admit either that the failings of colleges reflect the ethos of the country, or that in trying to establish their independence they breed a professional class that pursues its own insulated life.

These observations are occasioned by Gerald Graff's new book, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*. Graff has written a very thorough history, and, except for a few instances, mostly in dealing with the contemporary scene, he has met the issues head on. He takes us through the successive stages of educational theory and practice, particularly in the field of literary studies: from the earliest conceptions of a university as a place where the classics and rhetoric were taught, and religion emphasized; the sway of the genteel tradition; the influx of Germanic research methods; the early humanist and the primitive historical approach; the textual exegeses in the era of New Criticism; up to the current disarray of textual study, historicism, deconstruction, feminist theories, black esthetic, and old-fashioned scholarship. Graff also has judiciously gone into the

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arguments for each of these approaches, and into the ways by which they have been integrated into the apparatus of college teaching. Anyone familiar with university English courses, as I have been for many years, will recognize the succession of theories and practices described by Graff that has marked the transformation of the universities from upperclass institutions guarding moral and civic values and preserving the classics to democratic ones teaching the formalizations of dissent in higher learning today.

Graff's book is thick with detail. He recounts the arguments for all the theories behind the different practices in the teaching of literature. In this respect, *Professing Literature* is more than a study of the academic profession; it is a comprehensive and subtle history of literary theories and criticism. It is acute and informative in its discussion of the New Humanists, the New Critics, the Marxists, the deconstructionists, and the feminists. In each case, he tries to present as fairly as possible their merits as well as their shortcomings. But in view of his earlier criticism of the deconstructionists and the Marxists, he appears to be almost too neutral in his treatment of them in this book, as though he were swayed by the tolerance of differences in the academy. It is as if the inadequacies of various trendy movements had nothing to do with the right to teach them.

But, however valuable it is to know the history of what Graff calls professing literature, this is not enough to come to grips with the basic problems of teaching and learning, particularly of literature. We still have no widely accepted answer to the question of what the student should learn and the teacher should teach. Educators mouth platitudes about the acquisition of knowledge by the students and the imparting of this knowledge by their professors. But the fact is that mass education has created a body of students who are either not interested in or capable of absorbing much of the esoteric and professionalized ideas that are being dispensed in the name of higher learning. In addition, a good part of the faculty in colleges around the country has become an academic bureaucracy, with its own theories, its own language, its own interests. Take, for example, the fashionable spread of deconstruction in literary theory, which, aside from its questionable assumptions, has become the catechism of a network of professors who write for each other, read each other, promote each other, and share an esoteric jargon. It is hard to see how the teaching of deconstructionist ideas and methods has much to do with the raw students' needs to acquaint themselves with the classics of Western literature and literary criticism. As for more

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advanced or talented students, initiation into what has become a cult takes the place of more traditional literary education. Similarly, feminist and black studies, and other special approaches, are often presented to students before they have a grounding in the Western tradition. I am aware that deconstructionists, feminists, and some blacks deny the validity of this tradition. This is not the place to examine these arguments, but it seems to me that such a view leads to utter intellectual anarchy and nihilism.

These are some of the problems about which many of us can agree. But their solution is not so simple, not at least as long as we have undifferentiated mass education, and so long as there is no agreement on how literature should be taught. Indeed, we must face the possibility that some of these problems may be insoluble. But that should not prevent us from thinking about them. Graff tries to cope with the difficulties, inadequately, I think, by advancing an idea of pluralism seemingly to legitimate the present babel of theories, ideologies, and textual strategies. Perhaps Graff is saying simply that since we cannot decide on any single method of conducting literary classes, we might as well make the best of it.

If the problem should be insoluble, Graff may be right in tacitly accepting the status quo. But if we were to disregard the dictates of reality and were to think not of immediate but of ideal solutions, it would seem to me that the teaching of literature by an organized caste of literary theoreticians and political advocates does not provide the organic literary experience that students should acquire. To begin with, I would suggest that the graduate study of literature, which is now a vocational school for learning how to transmit the new theories to future students, should be revised simply to provide more intensive and wider reading of literary works. And feminist and black studies that are essentially historical or sociological and not literary should be located in departments of history, sociology, or political science.

Ultimately, I would like to see literature taught not by esthetic-ians, ideologists, or small-minded scholars, but mainly by writers and literary specialists who are also writers of fiction, poetry, or literary criticism. For the meaning of literary texts or of literary experience exists not in interpretive games or theories of hermeneutics, but in the influence of works in the past on contemporary writers. And their quality is determined only by the value given them by later writers and literary movements. Otherwise texts degenerate into icons whose value is taken for granted or are converted into po-

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litical pawns and objects for philosophers to play with. The fact is that poststructuralism and Lacanian approaches, which are not literary criticism but esthetic and eccentric psychoanalytic theory, and the application of Marxism, which is also not literary criticism but political theory, do not contain within themselves any criteria of literary quality. They simply assume the place of works in the tradition of literature that has been assigned to them by a consensus of writers and literary critics. The history of art is not an academic—or political—preserve; it is the history of the transformation of art by artists and critics. The New Critics, for example, tried to compensate for this lack of criteria by talking about paradox and ambiguity as though they were touchstones of literary quality, but it soon became clear that these aspects of poetry could not be measured and that they were present in some degree in all poetry. Nor could this method be applied to novels, as was evident in the writing, for example, of R. P. Blackmur on fiction.

As for mass education, it would be necessary to resist populist notions of democracy by separating those students who require more elementary educational procedures from those ready for a more sophisticated study of literature. This would obviously eliminate the elaborate strategies—that usually do not work—now resorted to for teaching students not prepared for complex studies.

These are radical—probably utopian—proposals. But they at least can be debated. Why not?

I am aware that, as Graff points out, all ideas about literature rest on some theory, implicit if not explicit. In this respect, my own suggestions are based on an antitheory theory—on the idea that extraneous theories, however interesting in themselves, should not invade literary studies.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

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INCARNATIONS OF INTELLECTUALS

THE KNOWLEDGE ELITE AND THE FAILURE OF PROPHECY. By Eva Etzioni-Halevy. Allen & Unwin. $18.50.
LIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS. Edited by Michael Sandel. New York University Press. $30.00.
A RADICAL PHILOSOPHY. By Agnes Heller. Basil Blackwell. $12.95.

Each of these books provides new opportunities for reflecting on attributes of Western intellectuals who continue to make claims on public interest, or at any rate on the interest of publics composed of the growing number of fellow intellectuals and quasi-intellectuals. Each of these books conveys something important—sometimes without the apparent intentions of its author—about Western intellectuals (although only one of them, Etzioni-Halevy's, is explicitly concerned with them).

There are several reasons for the persisting preoccupation with intellectuals in the West. One is that intellectuals, in their various incarnations, have become a large enough group to provide an audience and market for discussions of this kind. Another reason is the often noted functional importance of intellectuals in modern societies, said to be in great need of their services as a "knowledge elite" dispensing specialized expertise, advice for policy makers and meaningful communications. (One wonders, nonetheless, precisely what parts of modern society would grind to a halt, if, say, hundreds of thousands of professors in the humanities and social sciences would abruptly vanish?) At last, and far less questionably, intellectuals "have an inordinate share in shaping the ideas that either legitimize or de-legitimize existing social and political structures," as Etzioni-Halevy puts it.

I suggest that it is the chameleon-like character (using the word in a value-free way) of intellectuals that stimulates discussions of their attributes: it has been notoriously difficult to agree on what exactly is an intellectual. Intellectuals have too many incarnations and often play contradictory social roles. They fail to display indisputable defining characteristics. (Nobody has ever conducted an opinion poll of "intellectuals" as such for the obvious reason that it is difficult to nail down empiricially to what clearly identifiable occupational, educational or social categories these people belong.) At the same time it is hard to think of any other social group in our times upon which so many diverse characteristics can be projected

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and which lends itself so readily to both denigration and idealization.

The dispute about the roles and functions of intellectuals often centers on the propriety of their social-public involvements. "If they concentrate solely on the creation of knowledge they will be accused of secluding themselves in an ivory tower, of being socially unconcerned. . . . If they step out into the world and dispense practical advice they will be accused . . . of detracting from, perhaps more than they are contributing to, the welfare of Western society. Intellectuals are thus in a no-win situation; their role is open to criticism either way," according to Etzioni-Halevy.

Occasionally intellectuals are portrayed as heroic figures in modern society, a beleaguered group of fearless social critics, the new conscience of society, telling truth to power (as some would have it), relentlessly unmasking hypocrisy and exposing injustice. In such an idealized incarnation truth-seeking and an unshakeable idealism are their defining characteristics (as for example in the apotheosis Lewis Coser offered in his *Men of Ideas*, a title that must have become a source of some embarrassment due to its "sexist" character).

Perhaps intellectuals have been idealized because there is no one else left to idealize (by those who need to idealize some social force or entity). The social classes and groups earlier envisioned as harbingers, vanguards, triumphant historical actors bringing about a brighter future—the proletariat, Third World peasants, guerrilla fighters, charismatic leaders of the philosopher-king cast—all have fallen short of the expectations.

Idealizing intellectuals is made relatively easy by their elusiveness, making it possible to project upon them a wide range of characteristics. Perhaps for the same reason intellectuals have also been easily demonized and held accountable for more problems of modern society than any other collection of people (except Jews). Just as they lend themselves to idealizing projections, so too they have provided a convenient target for the projection of dark suspicions and discontents. Not unlike Jews (who swell their ranks), intellectuals are sometimes viewed as deeply subversive, iconoclastic, unpatriotic, undermining important traditional values, overly critical, lusting for power, unjustifiably privileged, condescending to ordinary people, and claimants of elite status on dubious grounds. It is often unclear for the critics how they make their (increasingly comfortable) living and what social utility their work has.

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Professor Etzioni-Halevy is not one of those inclined to idealize intellectuals, although her critiques rest on relatively narrow and specific grounds. What she objects to is the extravagant problem-solving claims made by them, unmatched by their performance. As she sees it, at times their advice has created new problems. They have been "false prophets," "legitimiz[ing] their intellectual endeavour by its prophetic qualities. That is to say, they continue to justify the creation of knowledge by its ostensible usefulness in guiding society towards a better future. . . ." They seek to legitimate their share of public funds by the alleged social benefits of the theoretical knowledge they create and seek to apply to social problems. At the same time the problems of Western societies have intensified during precisely the same period when the involvement of intellectuals with the problem-solving process has so spectacularly increased, when their "policy advice was becoming more pervasive and influential."

Intellectuals thus depicted—grasping for public funds to make a living and to maintain a facade of professional identity—are hardly the idealist-outsiders in pursuit of truth, knowledge and progress, as perceived earlier. Rather, they are an interest group engaged in a vast enterprise of self-promotion and self-legitimation, as Etzioni-Halevy sees it. She is particularly irritated with the so-called postindustrialists who claim powers of prediction and subscribe (or used to) to an unreasonably rosy picture of the future but failed to predict the turmoils of the sixties and seventies. Not surprisingly she is also irked by social scientists of the applied persuasion who "continue to be more adamant than ever in their belief in the fruitfulness of their knowledge, in the soundness of the advice emanating from that knowledge and the salutary effects on policy emanating from that advice."

It is an interesting question (not pursued in this slim volume): why have Western governments and private foundations been so willing to fund so much research of such limited, questionable, or nonexistent benefit? Presumably such generosity reflects the persisting misidentification of the applicability (and scientific character) of social as distinct from natural scientific knowledge and the leftover rationalist hopes of the eighteenth and nineteenth century which continue to benefit the "knowledge elite."

The portrait of intellectuals here presented closely resembles that of the "new class" but neglects their animating political values. This study chronicles the failings of Western intellectuals as policy

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advisers without probing what values other than naked self-interest make the social engineering role so attractive.

The book, as the author correctly observes, is not likely to please intellectuals as it is an exercise in the demystification of their social-political roles. At the same time this study creates a somewhat misleading impression of Western intellectuals as pragmatically and cheerfully predisposed to dispense advice and assist the powers-to-be in their "system maintenance" and motivated by an unshakeable, if self-interested, faith in benevolent social engineering. While doubtless many Western intellectuals could thus be characterized, an equally important (if not larger) portion of them have withdrawn into a reflexive denigration and embittered criticism of their social-political institutions and systems, hardly inclined to dispense advice on how to improve them.

It would have been of interest to cast at least a fleeting glance at comparable (and even more resounding) failures of knowledge elites in non-Western, state-socialist societies where social engineering has been a totally institutionalized and politicized activity legitimated largely by Marxism-Leninism and engaging knowledge elites far more closely integrated with the government bureaucracy.

It is also to be regretted that this lucid and thoughtful volume says virtually nothing about the moralizing functions and activities of the knowledge elite, although it would seem that public moralizing—whether of the legitimizing or delegitimizing kind—has become a major identifying characteristic of prominent Western intellectuals. That such public moralizing has often entailed momentous political-ideological misjudgements, themselves not unrelated to an overestimation of the benefits of social engineering, is another topic of interest closely bound up with the concerns of this study. Surely there is more room here for demystification.

It is the respective strengths and weaknesses of the ideas associated with liberalism and socialism (preeminent beliefs of Western intellectuals) which are the major subject of the other two volumes here commented upon. A scrutiny of these books also brings to light attributes of these intellectuals not explored or self-consciously reflected upon by the authors.

Reading *Liberalism and Its Critics*, one is led to wonder why equality has become such a consuming preoccupation, indeed obsession of Western intellectuals, who by no means underestimate their own qualifications and often display an elite consciousness and full awareness of their elite status. Such otherwise egalitarian people don't shy away from making claims of special competence to be used

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both in the solution of the practical problems of modern society and in devising moral guidance for its members. Moreover, for many intellectuals, and certainly those on the left, the dedication to equality has long moved beyond a support for equal opportunity—they have been drawn toward equality of result, a vision of universal entitlement. Such a commitment, as this collection also shows, in turn directs attention to the problems of implementing egalitarian or redistributionist values, and the attendant expansion of the power and machinery of the state which threaten individual rights also cherished by intellectuals.

Probably the commitment to equality derives its intensity and passion from its fusion with the longing for community which is much easier to envisage if it is an egalitarian enterprise. In any event modern intellectuals (as I have noted elsewhere) are torn between their heartfelt and morally sustaining egalitarianism and an irrepressible elitism. To be sure, not all of them subscribe to egalitarianism but many take it for granted in some measure. Among the merits of this volume is that it brings together both types, authors not usually found between the same covers of books or journals. Thus we find here on the one hand Isaiah Berlin, Peter Berger, Robert Nozick and Michael Oakshott (a disparate group in its own right by other criteria), as well as Hannah Arendt, Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls and Michael Walzer, among others.

The current fluidity of attributes such as liberal and conservative is illustrated by the editor's classification of Isaiah Berlin as a major exponent and voice of modern liberalism. While this reviewer agrees with him, others would label Berlin an arch-conservative. If in the more rarified and precise realm of philosophical discourse somewhat different meanings attach to these terms, in the more popular discourse a significant reinterpretation has taken place (over the past quarter century or so) which has led to the frequent replacement of the "liberal" appellation by "conservative" or "neoconservative."

As the editor, Michael Sandel, sees it, his authors encompass a spectrum ranging from liberatarian liberals (some would call them these days conservatives) through egalitarian liberals (generally perceived nowadays as the true liberals) to communitarians who may overlap with either of the other two designations.

In some instances the essays (or excerpts) are not so much focused on liberalism as on modernity, as for example the outstanding piece by Peter Berger examining the conflict between modernity and the concept of honor. While the volume brings together some

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gems, all have appeared before (most of them more than a decade ago) and—as is often the case with such collections—the claim to coherence is somewhat tenuous.

A Radical Philosophy by Agnes Heller reminds us of other time-honored incarnations of the Western intellectual: the pursuer of utopia and the purveyor of esoteric language and terminology inaccessible even to educated but unspecialized audiences (the predilection for such modes of expression itself may be viewed as another interesting and perhaps unintended form of elitism). Certainly such a propensity for an effortless but overpowering obscurity of expression is among the negative stereotypes of intellectuals. Perhaps part of the problem, in this case, has to do with the fact that this book, presumably written in Hungarian (the author's native language), was translated and first published in 1978 in German, and subsequently translated into English. Consider such statements:

> Radical philosophy, the philosophy of Karl Marx, can be understandingly misunderstood in many ways. The different understanding misunderstandings express an affinity with different radical needs. It is therefore the duty of every recipient of Marx to carry out a philosophical value discussion with the other recipients of Marx. In other words, they must recognize that the other person's understanding misunderstanding is just as *true* as their own understanding misunderstanding.

Or:

> Radical philosophy . . . places its trust solely in the free human act. However, the precondition for this is a personality that is capable of free human acts, that is to say, a personality which has given life meaning.

Or:

> Philosophy addresses the rational being and remains firmly within the sphere of what can be rationally thought: its rational utopia can always be thought rationally.

Whether or not this mode of expression has an affinity with the utopian mentality—such as disclosed by this book—is an interesting question to ponder.

The author, a former disciple of George Lukács, is an adherent of some variety of neorevisionist-humanist Marxism, widely em-

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braced by Western academic intellectuals. (She writes, in a language replete with religious imagery and association, that "I understand myself as a recipient of Marx's philosophy. . . ." But unlike her many Western fellow-Marxists, she experienced firsthand (in Eastern Europe) the delicate problems which attend the application of this theory to the lives of people, and her experience led, among other things, to a renewed and deep appreciation of pluralism of all kinds, as this volume and her other writings testify. She is unlikely to be found among Western intellectuals who time and again discover the advent of true socialism in assorted Third World police states. Her Kingdom is not of this world.

Yet a stubborn utopian streak (or what I am tempted to call a God-seeking Marxism) lurks in these pages. Professor Heller evidently does continue to wish for and believe in (as have others before her) the possibility of a social order that will be free of relationships of subordination and superordination, conflicts of interest, and the division of labor. She is sympathetic to "radical needs":

> *A unitary humanity as a reality* and not merely as an idea, as a community of the unity of mutually understanding and mutually supporting different forms of life, which all continually remove conflicts of interest between them: that is a radical need. It exists as a need, but it cannot be satisfied within a society constituted by relationships of subordination and superordination and conflicts of interest. . . .
> . . . Radical needs are . . . needs which one can imagine being satisfied simultaneously. It is even our duty to think how they could be satisfied simultaneously within a society . . . not to be based on subordination and superordination.

The radical utopia here envisioned, like the old Marxist one, remains haunted by the original sin of the division of labor. ("It is part of the idea of the radical utopia that it is committed to the abolition of the quasi-natural division of labor, to the abolition of the conflict of interest and hence the abolition of interest regulation itself.") In short the state will and should wither away.

Professor Heller seeks a political state of grace where the plurality of needs (approved) will flourish without a conflict of interest (deplored):

> We therefore have to conceive of a value with *a claim to universal validity* [my emphasis], and the universal observance of this value

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> must presuppose that needs are *not* expressed through the mediation of interests. It must be assumed that if our guiding values are to be universal, then each of the many needs must be purged of every element of interest—the need satisfaction of certain groups of people will not in principle collide with the need satisfaction of another group. This is the only way in which *the progress of humanity can be conceived.*

This is an outlook that refuses to be reconciled with the world as it is, as it has always been, and is likely to remain, namely one of disharmony, fragmentation, imperfection, conflicting values, clashing interests, limited gratifications and scarcities of all kinds (least of which are material). This outlook (and emotional predisposition) is the polar opposite of the worldview memorably summed up by Isaiah Berlin (in the volume discussed earlier):

> The world that we encounter in ordinary experience is one in which we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate and claims equally absolute, the realization of some of which must inevitably involve sacrifice of others. Indeed, it is because this is their situation that men place such immense value upon the freedom to choose; for if they had assurance that in some perfect state, realizable by men on earth, no ends pursued by them would ever conflict, the necessity and agony of choice would disappear . . . .

Apparently visions of this perfect state continue to haunt and tempt many Western intellectuals, even some of those who have seen at close range the results of the attempt to construct societies based on values "with a claim to universal validity."

PAUL HOLLANDER

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IN DEFENSE OF CAPITALISM

THE CAPITALIST REVOLUTION: FIFTY PROPOSITIONS ABOUT PROSPERITY, EQUALITY, AND LIBERTY. By Peter L. Berger. Basic Books. $17.95.

The most striking thing about *The Capitalist Revolution* is its unyieldingly empirical character. Peter Berger is not without strong values, expressed in many books and a great deal of effective writing, some of it in *Partisan Review*. But here, despite the polemical character of his title (in which he enters the enemy camp, so to speak, to appropriate "revolution" for "capitalism"), values are, in the language of the economists, "exogenous": *If* you favor prosperity, equality, and liberty, he says, then let us consider how capitalism is related to the enhancement or achievement of a condition of greater prosperity, equality, and liberty.

If there have been few reviews of this book by Marxists—I have not noticed any—it may well be because of its committed empiricism as well as because of a distaste for a book which argues that capitalism, on the whole, has advanced such values. It says, here are capitalist countries, more or less, here are socialist. Let us see—taking into account different conditions, times, cultures—as best we can, which pattern of arranging economic life has advanced the values most of us consider desirable. The formulation "*if* . . . *then*" is no game: There are people, if only a few, who do consider too much prosperity or equality or liberty inimical to the good life, or the best life, or the most admirable community. It is of course of the essence of Marxism that its version of science refuses a strictly empirical approach, in which one divorces fact from value: Marxism, Marxists argue, is a science meant for practice, implicated in action, not one in which social scientists separate themselves from the social world, and look at it as an object, akin to the objects of natural science. That very divorce, the fact-value distinction which is at the heart of modern science, according to Marxists, distorts and falsifies one's analysis. And similarly, in Marxist analysis, normative values are incorporated *ab initio*: this is perhaps what makes it possible for Marxists, like early Christians, to ignore the failure of historical development to follow the course that this new science, so closely enmeshed with action and value, projected and predicted. Among these predictions were the increasing immiseration of the working

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class, the increasing polarization of society into two active proponents, bourgeoisie and working class, the increasing intensity of the economic crises of capitalism, and others.

The rather classic arguments against Marxism as science play little role in Peter Berger's book. Some Marxist predictions already seemed falsified by the turn of the century (as Eduard Bernstein argued), just about all by the 1950s. Berger is not much concerned about the theory of Marxism or socialism—or for that matter the theory of capitalism. He is concerned here rather with living, actual, present capitalist and socialist societies. This strategy is indeed refreshing. It makes irrelevant most current Marxist and neo-Marxist writing, which rarely analyzes *real* socialist societies—Soviet Russia, the countries of Eastern Europe, China—and busies itself rather with the critique of capitalist societies, set against some ideal standard called socialist, but of which as yet no examples exist on the earth. Berger's strategy of eschewing a competition between ideal, theoretical models of capitalism and socialism, in favor of the empirical analysis of actual societies, requires some test we use to decide which are capitalist and which socialist. It would scarcely do to accept self-advertisement—for then we have to consider whether Sweden, with its economy almost entirely in private hands, but its government in the hands of Social Democrats for most of the last fifty years, is "socialist," or whether the host of African states which call themselves so are really "socialist."

An empirical test is then necessary, and one which does not do violence to what we ordinarily conceive of as the capitalist world and the socialist world. For Berger, capitalism is "production for a market by enterprising individuals or combines with the purpose of making a profit." This makes sense, and, as he writes, this is exactly what Marx was talking about. Its alternative is production organized by the state: "Under modern conditions (that is, conditions brought about by industrial technology—conditions that of course include the astronomically large populations made possible by the technological transformation) . . . the basic option is whether economic processes are to be governed by market mechanisms or by mechanisms of political allocation. In social science parlance, this is the option between market economies and command economies."

There will undoubtedly be discomfort, perhaps outrage, in the fact that Berger uses the term "socialist" for what we ordinarily call "communist" societies, but his definition makes clear that we are talking about market economies and command economies, and that

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Sweden, or whatever other country has been shaped by long rule by a socialist or social democratic party, is overwhelmingly—compared with any communist country—a market economy: that is, dominated by investment and production for the market at home, and abroad, by private firms in competition with others at home and abroad. One can understand the squirming of a long-time socialist at the cool appropriation of the term "capitalism" for a country in which sixty percent of Gross National Product is collected in taxes for government purposes and social redistribution, and the appropriation of the term "socialist" for those countries in which decisions on investment and production are made by the state, and one may well charge that these terms are used for polemical purposes, less to analyze the consequences that flow from market and command economies, than, for example, to undermine public schemes of income redistribution for purposes of greater equality. But while the argument can be made, the fact is that the two labels are used in the book without any such visible intention: there is little on social policy generally in the book, and Berger is skeptical of the Hayekian view that increased proportions of government spending, at least to the levels we have seen in market economies to date, put a society on the road to socialism—in his terms, that is, to becoming a command economy. If one substitutes "market economy" and "command economy" wherever Berger uses "capitalism" and "socialism," his argument is unchanged. Berger can be challenged over his appropriation of the terms "capitalism" and "socialism" for the two forms. His best defense is that these are the terms Marx used, and he meant by them more or less what Berger means.

Of course there are no pure market economies, no pure command economies. The market is heavily regulated and affected by political decisions even in the countries where markets are freest, and the market may be seen to operate, to some extent, even in Soviet Russia. We must deal with societies as they exist. The differences among them however are still so substantial that we have no difficulty in drawing a line through the advanced industrial societies, dividing capitalist from socialist. (What to do about developing societies may be more complicated.) What Berger resolutely refuses to do is attach to the key definitional difference any *other* element of social life: For the problem is, just what *does* this difference imply for society, politics, culture? We can make an *argument*—this is the argument so regularly made in the 1930s in books on Soviet Russia—that socialism leads to more material goods and prosperity, or that it is

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"production for use," but that is not part of a definition, it is an argument to be tested. Similarly with equality and freedom. Nor can we make the error of confusing what results from or is connected with capitalism with what results from or is connected with modern industrial technology. All societies make use of *that*, and that imposes its own imperatives. But if we compare current capitalist and socialist societies, we do in fact contrast societies of not very different levels of industrial development and capacity.

And how does the analysis come out? It will not be surprising to find put as almost the first proposition that industrial capitalism "has generated, and continues to generate the highest material standard of living for large masses of people in human history." A fierce argument has been waged over the human costs imposed by early industrial capitalism, and Berger, reviewing this debate, does not reject the possibility of an "actual decline in material living standards" and certainly of great costs in social and cultural dislocation. Immediately the argument then shifts to the impact of this economic growth on inequality, and here Berger, following Simon Kuznets and others, argues that while in early capitalism one may see an increase in inequality, this is followed by a decline, and then it seems a plateau is reached in the distribution of income that is not easily affected by public policy. This plateau occurs only in part because of redistributionist policies, in greater part because of a higher average level of education, the great reduction in agricultural employment, and other demographic and technological forces. These processes seem rather similar in industrial capitalist and socialist societies. Similarly, it does not seem possible to argue there is more social mobility—movement from one class to another—in socialist than capitalist societies. In both, there is moderate mobility, mostly mediated through education. (Here perhaps Berger underestimates the enormous shaking up when revolution occurs, but as for established capitalist and socialist societies, the evidence suggests he is right.)

One may thus see elements of convergence in all industrial societies, capitalist or socialist, when it comes to prosperity and inequality and social mobility. When it comes to liberty and democracy, one would expect no such thing. Capitalism is in fact, today, a necessary if not sufficient condition for democracy. No country on the socialist side of the spectrum is a democracy. And yet Yugoslavia and Hungary are undoubtedly freer than Soviet Russia and Romania, and who knows what the future may bring for China.

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Berger sees the reasons why there is as yet no socialist democracy but cautiously hypothesizes that "if a socialist economy is opened up to market forces, a point (not precisely specifiable at this time) will be reached at which democratic governance becomes a possibility." Despite this open-mindedness, he is not optimistic. One reason is that the market gives independent power—independent of the state—to individuals. And he doubts that this broadening of individual power can be carried out in a society where a political elite makes all key economic decisions.

A decade ago, Peter Berger pondered and wrote about "underdeveloped" countries and problems of development, and in recent years he has been deeply interested in the one great example of a non-Western country (Japan) that is both successfully capitalist and a democracy, and in the "little dragons"—South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—which have shown such remarkable economic success, but which are, with variations, not democracies on the Western (or Japanese) model. Japan and its neighbors seem to answer the question of whether there is some necessary relationship between the history of the West and a successful capitalism. Max Weber connected the rise of capitalism (he considered it an example of rationality, at work in many spheres of Western life aside from the economy) to the historical accident of the creation of a kind of this-worldly asceticism embodied in Calvinism, which itself would have to be traced back, in some degree, to ancient Israel. He raised sharply the question of whether Western industrial capitalism could be easily exported, or develop, or made indigenous to societies with very different traditions and histories.

East Asia demonstrates that capitalism can develop and take hold in conditions very different from those offered by early modern Europe, in societies in which personal autonomy and individualism are not greatly developed or highly valued, and under conditions in which there is a greater degree of state intervention and guidance. These realities challenge some simple-minded views of capitalism which emphasize only the role of individual autonomy and entrepreneurship and see state action as only the enemy of capitalism. We have in the East examples of what we might call a more "communal" capitalism, as expressed in the social patterns of the Japanese firm. But if Japanese capitalism is independent of distinctive Western values, it is certainly dependent on *some* values deeply embodied in traditional cultures. This suggests some hope for the economic development of non-Western societies, but it also warns that this

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hope will be realized only where there is a distinctive, favoring historical culture. One cannot be too optimistic about the economic development of those poor countries outside the East Asian cultural complex.

Berger concludes by taking up the problem discussed by Joseph Schumpeter, Daniel Bell, and Irving Kristol. Capitalism may be an economic success. But that gives it no credit with intellectuals, with the best minds of capitalist society. "The insight that an enduring human community requires a belief in its essential rightness," Berger writes, "long antedates modern social science. It is implied in the biblical statement (Deuteronomy 8:3, quoted approvingly by Jesus) that man does not live by bread alone, in the statement of Confucius (Analects 12:7) to the effect that government requires food, weapons, and the confidence of the people—and that it could, if necessary, do without the first two but never without the last." Capitalism is deprived of a legitimating myth: not so socialism. "The mythic deprivation of capitalism is, very likely, grounded on the fact that capitalism is an economic system and nothing else. . . ." And "all economic realities are essentially *prosaic*, as against the poetry that inspires, moves, and converts human minds." Berger proposes no heroic effort to add the dimension of myth to capitalism. After all, capitalism has survived for a long time without much in the way of myth. It may be able to appropriate and attach to itself other commitment-producing myths (liberty? personal liberation?). But even without that, as long as capitalism *works*—produces a better life for most people—it should continue to survive despite the absence of "mythic potency."

Perhaps capitalism can survive without creating for itself the kind of myth that keeps socialism going despite its failures. But the sympathetic analysts of capitalism's contradictions have pointed to other problems, to which Berger does not devote much attention, in particular the impact of production for the market in the sphere of cultural products, and where it turns out the most successful products may undermine the values—the commitments to work, discipline, saving, family—which early and mature capitalism assumed and built on. This may be a greater danger to capitalism than the failure to develop a potent myth: it may well be the reason Japan and the little dragons do so well. Their values are changing too and largely under the impact of capitalism, but they started on this course later, and they still have the advantage of values less desiccated by cultural modernity and cultural production for the market.

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There is much more in this cool, balanced, and insightful book that one could comment on: it packs an amazing amount of fact and good judgement in its brief 260 pages. It recognizes what capitalism cannot do, and what it can, and has, done. But what it has done is what most people seem to want, and what socialism promises, and does worse at providing, a better material life. Not enough to die for, as Berger recognizes, but enough to make it worth defending against alternatives that cannot even provide that, and would to boot take away the degree of personal freedom with which capitalism coexists very comfortably.

NATHAN GLAZER

NICARAGUAN JOURNEYS

WHERE IS NICARAGUA? By Peter Davis. Simon and Schuster. $18.95.
THE JAGUAR SMILE: A NICARAGUAN JOURNEY. By Salman Rushdie. Viking. $12.95.

Commenting on the scores of writers and intellectuals who journeyed to Spain during the Spanish Civil War, Simone Weil noted some fifty years ago that it was "in fashion to go on a tour down there, to take in a spot of revolution, and to come back with articles bursting out of your pen." Weil realized that such endeavors had to be superficial, since "principles get completely out of phase with realities," and any objective criterion for judging events disappears. How, Weil asked, could a writer "report something coherently on the strength of a short stay and some fragmentary observations?"

Would that both these authors had heeded Weil's advice before they put pen to paper. Both of these men toured Nicaragua for three weeks—Rushdie as a guest of the ruling Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN)—and yet, we are supposed to trust their accounts as definitive. What they reveal is less about Nicaragua and more about their intellectual role as modern-day political pilgrims, ever ready to bring back their enthusiastic accounts of revolution, despite the realities that somehow evade their notice. They fulfill Leon Trotsky's shrewd observation that they succeed only in producing a "kind of contemplative, optimistic, anything but destructive

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literature, which presumes that all troubles are over," resulting in a new form of revolution—"socialism for radical tourists."

These books are in fact two sides of the same coin. The Rushdie book is an unabashed and easily transparent piece of propaganda, while the Davis volume seeks to appear as a balanced account that disparages both the Sandinistas' cheerleaders as well as their deprecators but ends up, as does Mr. Rushdie's, blaming any faults in Nicaragua on the *contra* war waged against the revolution by the United States.

Mr. Rushdie takes his title from a limerick he came across. It tells of a woman who rode on a jaguar, only to find that the jaguar was the one who smiled, since she became its next meal. Mr. Rushdie escapes the irony that, like the woman, he himself was swallowed by the revolution whose darker side he fails to acknowledge, and that his sponsors have good reason to have a smile on their faces. Indeed, much of his book reads like a paen to the Sandinista *commandantes*, whom he finds to be "men of integrity and great pragmatism, with an astonishing lack of bitterness towards their opponents." Mr. Rushdie has only sympathy for Daniel Ortega's bitterness at being condemned for buying those famous designer eyeglasses in New York. After all, Ortega's spouse Rosario Murillo explains, they were a gift from a wealthy American friend, and "we cannot get such things here, but still." Rushdie does not check back to find the Ortegas paid for them with an embassy Diner's Club card, and that they spent more for the purchase than they received in a check for medical supplies from devoted American supporters meeting at the Ethical Culture Society. Nor does he describe the luxurious mansion in which the couple lives, filled with the wealth of the millionaire Nicaraguan from whom they confiscated the house, despite the fact that the man was a supporter of the revolution. But when Mr. Rushdie visits Violetta Chamorro, the widow of the slain editor of *La Prensa*, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, he scornfully records that "she wore a great deal of jewelry; gold bracelets and earrings, and quantities of black coral." There is no such description of the lavish gowns and makeup worn by Madame Ortega, whose outfits in her Western and Hollywood appearances are among her most noted attributes. Evidently, when Rosario appears so bedecked, it is not to be viewed as a failure to make "concessions to the spirit of the 'new Nicaragua'."

As a writer, of course, Mr. Rushdie is opposed to censorship, and he is saddened when a Sandinista editor at the official FSLN

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paper tells him freedom of the press is merely "cosmetic." Rushdie then partakes in a "silent argument" with himself about its necessity. His conclusion comes quickly: the "flaws of censorship" are not sufficient reason to overthrow a decent and good revolution. Moreover, he has faith in the leaders. He is sure they don't want censorship, since they are definitely not "dictators in the making."

Like Mr. Rushdie, Peter Davis went to Nicaragua for a scant three weeks in 1983, on assignment for *The Nation*. He returned to update his material for a shorter period in 1986, and the result is a book. Unabashed apologia is not Mr. Davis's style. He means to appear as balanced observer. Nicaragua, he suggests, is neither the Gulag nor a workers' paradise. He manages to find great fault with aspects of the revolution, but in the last resort he always attributes its defects to the policies of the United States. Mr. Davis does not seem to understand that despite his good intentions, he travelled in a context established by the Sandinistas.

Thus he visits the powerful Minister of the Interior, Tomas Borge, and retells the story of how Borge captured and then freed the very Guardia who had tortured him before the revolution. Borge's act is meant to reveal both his sense of mercy as well as the values of the revolution. This obligatory story also appears in Mr. Rushdie's account. Neither seems to know, or to see a need to seek out, all those Nicaraguans who have been subjected to unspeakable tortures by Mr. Borge's own ministry.

When Mr. Davis seeks to find out how the revolution treats workers, the subject of a separate chapter, he is taken to the leader of the official Sandinista trade union. The National Secretary of the CST is described as "modest, teacherly, patient." Mr. Davis does not know that the Sandinista union is acting as a company union, using its power to force workers into its ranks and to accede to the demands of the state—which include a compulsory ban on strikes. Mr. Davis does not see fit to go to the headquarters of the old, militant trade unions, to the CTN or the CUS, whose leaders have been harassed, arrested, and beaten up by goons working for the patient Mr. Chavarria.

Mr. Davis wants us to think he is thoughtful and skeptical, not another revolutionary tourist. Yet he writes to "locate context" for the conflict between the United States and Nicaragua. By the book's end, he suggests this means the necessity of ending aid to the *contras*. If we continue to support them, he argues, the United States will be forced to send troops to their rescue, or sacrifice American credibil-

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ity and let them fail. The end result would be an armed American invasion, a tragedy that would isolate the United States, lead to unnecessary deaths, and once again return our nation to Vietnam. Mr. Davis does not want to film a sequel to his film, *Hearts and Minds*.

It is the stock argument of the anti-interventionists, one that fails to consider the reports of the many *campesinos* who are becoming a solid social base in support of the *contras*, and who are aiding them in their military effort. Mr. Davis did not seek to interview or find any of them, or to inquire as to why so many former Sandinistas, even socialists, have defected and become supporters of those who are supposed Somocistas. Nor does he let his readers know that after the State of Emergency was declared in 1985, six of the major opposition parties—from Communist to Social Christian, asked for amnesty for the rebels and immediate negotiations with them, suggesting the path of reconciliation and democratization as the only practical way out of continual warfare. In response, Managua made it a criminal offense to even refer to the fighting with the *contras* as a "civil war." When he discusses the opposition parties, he suggests instead that they are as anti-*contra* as the government.

Quoting Milan Kundera, Davis asks whether it is possible Nicaragua will end as Czechoslovakia, a Stalinized country where those who hold doubts were "squashed between the fingers like an insect." He acknowledges at one point that from one perspective, the Sandinistas might appear not just as a "feisty band of patriots straining for independence from the American imperium, but also a group of leaders as susceptible as any other to the fatal contagion of power." But Davis lets us know such is not the case: Daniel Ortega assures him that his country is different, although he says that freedom is "not for the individual," and that "your freedom, sir, is a monster." In his own words, Peter Davis tells us he agrees: "The other freedoms Americans prize had never had a place in Nicaraguan life anyway. Foremost among these is freedom of expression." At any rate, whatever limits on freedom exist are clearly America's doing. Would the United States, Davis asks, if faced with an army invading us from Canada and Mexico, "leave in place all the civil liberties we are so proud of?" Mr. Davis suggests we would not, and that we have great nerve to "insist that Nicaragua's censorship is totalitarian."

So Mr. Davis talks of the "missed opportunity" the United States had to "befriend revolutionaries with anticapitalist roots before they became dependent on the programs and ideology of the

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Soviet Union." But for all his research, Mr. Davis seems not to realize that before the revolution, the FSLN made clear exactly what their ideology and goals were—and like other naive observers, he ignores these or fails to take them seriously. The FSLN founders were trained in the crude Soviet Marxism of the Stalin era, and from the early 1970s it has been the very Soviet model the FSLN has chosen to adopt, and which it eventually imposed on the Nicaraguan society.

He asks: "What kind of a revolution can an impoverished and oppressed society hope to have that the United States will find desirable and supportable?" He might have asked a different question more profitably: What kind of revolution might Nicaragua have had, had the self-proclaimed vanguard not used its armed might to impose its private agenda on a once popular and broad-based revolution? Mr. Davis's failure to ask *that* question is the fallacy of his entire quest. Mr. Rushdie is an unabashed apologist. But it is finally Peter Davis who serves the Sandinistas' propaganda goals far more effectively.

RONALD RADOSH

SARTRE AND BIOGRAPHY

SARTRE: A BIOGRAPHY. By Ronald Hayman.
Simon and Schuster. $22.95.
THE FAMILY IDIOT: GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, 1821-1857, Vol. II.
By Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Carol Cosman.
The University of Chicago Press, $27.50.

It might at first seem that writing a biography of Sartre is an impossibility, for all the obvious reasons: the vastness of his life, the complexity of his ideas, the inappropriateness of portraying a life of the mind through the revelation of personal, often sordid details. On the simplest level, though, one is forced to admit that this is a problem that confronts anyone who attempts to write the life of a thinker. Inevitably, pages devoted to summarizing a book, a political position, a philosophical stance, will be followed by incongruous details that inform us of the kind of drugs the subject was using, with whom he or she was sleeping, where the vacations were taken that year, and so on. It might make for amusing reading, but

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one can argue that it gives us nothing more—and probably a good deal less—than does a serious reading of the biographical subject's books.

Yet the heterogeneous approach of Ronald Hayman's biography of Sartre seems perfectly appropriate to its subject. Throughout his career Sartre himself was obsessed with biography: his alter-ego Roquentin, in *Nausea*, gives up one biography (that of M. de Rollebon) only to save himself by imagining writing another (the life of the composer of "Some of These Days"); and Sartre wrote biographies (after his own fashion) of Baudelaire, Genêt, Mallarmé (never completed), Freud (a film script, never filmed), and, on a monumental scale, Flaubert (three volumes published, never completed). In addition, he wrote an autobiography, which does not get beyond his childhood (*The Words*). And even his works that are not overtly biographical deal with the same problems of bad faith and commitment, novels such as *The Age of Reason* and *Death in the Soul*, plays like *Dirty Hands* and *The Devil and the Good Lord*. Sartre's biographies of thinkers are characterized precisely by a lack of respect for the dividing line between their works and their personal experiences. He passes moral judgement not on the content of a novel or poem, but on early "life decisions" that in many cases cannot be substantiated. There is confusion between what really counts in a writer's life—his or her writings—and that which is extraneous, unsupported, or irrelevant detail.

But it is not only Sartre the biographer who forces his own strategy on his biographer; it is Sartre the subject. Sartre's life itself was strangely heterogeneous, involving both a private literary activity, the production of important works whose larger "meaning" is really very obscure (one thinks especially of *Nausea*), and a media figure, an intellectual superstar whose writings (at least in the larger public sphere) became virtually irrelevant, but whose many trips (Cuba, Russia, Brazil, various prisons, factories, presidents' mansions), activities (selling a Maoist newspaper in the streets), and signatures (often of documents he had not read) came to have a very real importance for many and entertainment value for perhaps just as many others. Sartre's biographer cannot possibly disentangle his personal activities—nearly all of which after 1945 were carried out in public—and the content and possible function of Sartre's writings.

This really begins to strike the reader of Hayman's biography about midway through. Sartre before 1945—before the massive fame that fell on him virtually out of the blue—was a writer fervently

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committed to his career, but he was also a very private person. He was operating on the elite circuit of French literature, publishing in *Nouvelle Revue Française*, writing novels, essays, and stories that could not help but have a limited audience. *Nausea*, published in 1938, was considered a success when it sold 10,000 copies. His books were read and reviewed, but he was no star: his friend Paul Nizan's *The Conspiracy* handily beat out *Nausea* for the Prix Interallié. There was no question of *Nausea* winning the Goncourt, the most prestigious prize. Sartre, at the outbreak of the war, was a promising young author of *literature* in a milieu dominated by figures such as Gide, Malraux, Aragon, Breton, Giraudoux, and many others.

The real turning point was the Liberation. Almost overnight, Sartre went from obscurity to fame; existentialism became the new wave; there were not only other writers (Camus, de Beauvoir) who could be seen as existentialists, but singers (Juliette Greco), jazz musicians (Boris Vian, also a writer), even artists (Giacometti's style was seen as being somehow "existentialist"). Hayman, at the beginning of Chapter Fifteen ("Chief Existentialist") gives a good summary of the reasons why, after so many years of obscurity, Sartre "caught on" and became a public figure so quickly. What people wanted above all in 1945 was a lessening of the burden of guilt that seemed omnipresent in a country that had collaborated, actively or passively, for four years with the occupier. Surrealism was discredited (not least by Sartre in his own writings): Breton and many others had fled to the United States, and their brand of revolution seemed feeble and petty when compared with the force—and force of evil—of Nazism. Literature—belles lettres, the maunderings of a Gide or a Mauriac—was guilty of the same weakness. Communism was attractive, but not everyone could delude himself about benefits to be gained from a Stalinist "liberation." This is where existentialism stepped in, for, unlike Stalinism, Sartrianism, while stubbornly (and bravely) upholding a Marxist view of society and social questions, nevertheless saw the role of the individual (and the individual conscience) as decisive in moral and political activity. As Hayman says:

> Sartrian existentialism mingled optimism with responsibility: each of us chooses the historical context in which he lives. If this idea had been formulated cynically to secure a maximum of popularity for Sartre, it could not have been more effective. What he was offering the French people was a chance to accept a share of

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> the blame for the immediate past at the same time that they affirmed their willingness to take charge of the immediate future.

The paradox was that this "popularity" was not the kind of renown that would follow from a genuine awareness of what Sartre was up to in his writing. Sartre attempted to found a political party in the late 1940s, the RDR (the Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire), which would have offered an alternative on the left to the duplicitous communists and the compromising socialists and Gaullists—that would have offered an alternative, according to Sartre, to Stalinism and capitalism. But the party failed; everyone came to hear the great thinker speak, yet nobody joined. Nor was he really read; his novels were popular, but Camus's literary success was much greater. The plays attracted a significant audience only in the 1940s. And the number of people who made serious inroads into *Being and Nothingness* was undoubtedly very small indeed. Sartre became a uniquely French institution, the star intellectual, the figure who comes to serve as a general "conscience" not for a specific group or class but for humanity as a whole. What is remarkable is that Sartre himself came to conform to his role of unread star; he tailored his philosophy and his entire writing practice to it. Hayman, no doubt too severely, implies that Sartre's later works cannot be taken seriously; they were written compulsively, on speed, more as a public gesture than anything else. One thinks of Sartre's famous comparison: writing, like the banana, is meant to be consumed "on the spot," its peel quickly jettisoned. Hayman charts the incoherencies, notes the repetitions, the contradictions. Works like the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, while containing important ideas, were never even reread by their own author; they were hurriedly written (six hours a day every day, ten pages) and published uncompleted, only to be contradicted later by another work (Hayman points out, for example, that many of Sartre's positions on psychoanalysis in *Being and Nothingness* are directly contradicted in his Freud screenplay). Quite often Sartre misplaced his own manuscripts or abandoned them after four or five hundred pages.

One gets the impression then, that Sartre, in this later phase, was writing not so much to be read as to facilitate or justify his public positions. He had to write something in order to be a media intellectual. And the content of his writings of course ratified his own public practice: they denied the possibility of an overarching system with a transcendental figure or idea, be it God or History. Man was alone,

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and each individual was inevitably acting on his own or at most in "groups in fusion," but groups that lacked a transcendental figure, a deity or Leader or Head. (Sartre did, however, still see himself as a humanist—for which the structuralists and poststructuralists roundly condemned him—but his humanism precluded any stable or complete concept of "Man.") Yet if that was the case, what room was there in the world for an intellectual whose very function, at least as conceived by Sartre, is to speak *for* others, who in spite of everything therefore leads them? To speak for others under whose authority, in the name of what? In the name of an ungraspable notion of "Man"? The fragmentary, ephemeral nature of his later writings was the embodiment of, and perhaps the expiation for, the guilty conscience of the privileged intellectual who "represented" others, but who could never fully validate that act through his own philosophy, and who could thus never justify to himself his own activity in general. For Sartre, the intellectual was always "merely" an intellectual. Young Hugo in *Dirty Hands* is ashamed that he is *only* a political writer, and nothing in the play convinces us that Hoederer is right when he tells Hugo that there is a place in the political struggle for able journalists, just as there is for macho "men of action."

The writing becomes less important, then, as the public activity, the public image, is magnified. Sartre's biography toward the end becomes a chronicle of his various positions of support, as when he spoke for the Algerian independence fighters, for Third World revolutionaries in general, or against the war in Vietnam in both its phases (French and American). But by this time he was pure public act; an appearance of Sartre at some event guaranteed its coverage in the press and on television. His writings had nothing to do with it; they seemed to lose importance even as they became more bloated. His gestures were important, and they served as a kind of moral education for many people; he was the nation's conscience, but as a philosopher, political theorist, and writer of literature, he was nothing. He ignored recent philosophy; he insulted the structuralists, Foucault, Lacan, *Tel Quel*. All that remained was Sartre the biographer: after three massive volumes of the Flaubert biography and just before he started the fourth, which was to have been an analysis of *Madame Bovary*, he went blind.

In recounting Sartre's life in this way, I have been giving it an order, in a sense rewriting (and rationalizing) Hayman's biography while retaining what appear to be his prejudices. I've replaced the incongruous juxtaposition of daily private and public acts and ac-

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counts of philosophical positions with a neat temporal progression: first came Sartre the writer, then Sartre the activist. First we can recount Sartre's life by chronicling his thought, then, for the postwar period, we can ignore the relatively unimportant writings and focus on the public gestures, the persona. But it is too neat. Hayman's biography necessarily has a double focus: the incongruity, the irreconcilable conflict between thought and action, word and deed.

The straightforward temporal distinction between early Sartre and late Sartre is equally disrupted by a consideration of the early works. After all, *Nausea* may be a rather hermetic novel that incorporates more than a few techniques of late surrealism; at the same time it must be seen as an accomplishment of the existentialist credo that would prove crucial for all of Sartre's postwar strategies: consciousness (to paraphrase or parody Husserl) is always consciousness *of* something else. There is no "inside" of consciousness, there is no "inner" life. Roquentin's vision of the melting tree root in the public park is not a subjective fantasy: it is a vision of the fundamental contingency that characterizes the physical world, a contingency that the bourgeois, in their pomposity, refuse to recognize. Sartre's descriptive style in this novel was meant to convey the idea that consciousness was not inward-turning or self-constituting, but rather that it was never separable from what it perceived: consciousness was a great "clarifying wind," transparent, empty, and somehow cleansing. Consciousness—or "Man"—could not be reduced to a self-digesting substance. Even the emotional reaction that seemed to characterize certain perceptions (fear before a horrible mask, for example) was somehow inherent in the object perceived, not in the consciousness of the perceiver. Roquentin's nausea was not "in" him; on the contrary, it was the attribute of the root, of the park, of all of nature.

From the outset, then, we see in Sartre a refusal of "literature" that conveys or embodies nothing more than a "self" that constitutes itself in a solipsistic manner. As with so many French authors of the 1930s, Sartre's enemy here was Proust. In this sense, Sartre's project never changed: from beginning to end he was concerned above all with the opening toward the outside, the consciousness of something else, be it a tree root or the "situation of the writer in 1947." The exterior, the contingent, that which could not be neatly contained as an "adventure" with beginning, middle, and end, was always, impossibly, his "subject."

But this led to a tremendous problem as well, one that also is

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visible already in *Nausea* but which was most difficult when Sartre became more "political" after the war. The writer must always write, and yet for Sartre writing and the function of the intellectual were always highly suspect. He could never get beyond the idea that literature is in a profound sense Proustian, always referring back to itself before it refers to or depicts the world "outside." *What Is Literature?* condemns a whole tradition of French literature; above all modern poetry, but avant-garde self-referential fiction as well. Even while Sartre put forward the idea of a necessary "engaged" literature, it was clear that for him the intellectual, the writer, was somehow tainted, that his (the intellectual's—but also therefore Sartre's) work never had the solidity or necessity of the product of manual labor. Sartre was always quick to condemn himself, along with the others, for his bad faith as a writer—a writer who could sit back and write while others fought and died—but the only way to get out of that bad faith was to analyze it, in other words to write about it. After all, Sartre had to face up to the truth that he was only an intellectual and to take responsibility for it. His only weapon against writing was more writing. The bad faith became worse the more he attempted to write his way out of it. Reams of paper flew; his public persona continued to inflate, but the self-analysis (carried out mainly through the analysis of his doubles, the various writers who were the subjects of his biographies) only increased in severity. His writing, supposedly directed outward, became the ultimate avant-garde self-consuming artifact. As he became more famous and devoted himself more to political, social, and moral questions in his public activities, his writing became ever more self-obsessed. The public stances and gestures, rather than being a logical consequence of the positions taken in the writing, must, in this light, be seen as a desperate antidote to the writing. Sartre was always quick to assent to accusations of his own bad faith (as he does throughout his autobiography, *The Words*) as a way of staying one step ahead of his critics, but this victory in the end was hollow.

We can say, then, that Hayman's approach to Sartre's biography is perfectly matched by Sartre's life. His life, in fact, was remarkably consistent. The early Sartre both practiced a hermetic, self-reflexive, often parodic, writing style and espoused, through that same writing style and in spite of it, a turn to the outside. The later Sartre both practiced a turn to an exterior, purely public self, and espoused, through his writing and in spite of himself, an ever-exacerbated, inward turning self-analysis. Yet that consistency was

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also a heterogeneity, the impossible melding of the inside and the outside, of writing and the world.

The second volume of the projected five-volume English language edition of Sartre's *L'Idiot de la famille* has just been published. (It was originally published in French in 1971.) It is easy to see why Flaubert "got under Sartre's skin" to such an extent: they are the "frères ennemis" of modern French literature. Both loathed the bourgeoisie, and their response to it was in many ways similar. One thinks of Flaubert's "Dictionary of Received Ideas": this collection of banalities which were supposedly articles of faith of the bourgeoisie—or at least manifestations of its thought process—was probably the project Flaubert considered the most central. Most of his novels were in a sense generated out of it; his last work, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, depicts the lives of two hapless bachelors who actually attempt to live by a kind of credo of "received ideas." Through these stupidities, Flaubert depicted the bad faith of the bourgeois, their silly smugness, their refusal to think for themselves, their grasping preformulated opinion that was as mindless as it was omnipotent. This kind of depiction of the bourgeoisie is really not that far from Sartre's conception of a modern man who hypocritically attempts to find salvation through arbitrarily imposed and accepted absolutes, who is happy to accept a dictator before he confronts the responsibilities and inevitable failures of action in a Godless world. But there the similarity stops. While Flaubert was an utter nihilist who saw nothing beyond the bourgeoisie except a yawning abyss, Sartre was able to maintain an optimism, at least to the extent that he apparently continued to believe in the working class, political action, and the possibility of the betterment of the lives of most of the world's people. The critique (and hatred) of the bourgeoisie by these two thinkers was the same, but it went off in two different directions. Flaubert still fantasized about an inherently elite caste, an impossible aristocracy (a "complex" that Sartre analyses in the last chapter of this volume), while Sartre wanted to throw in his lot with the workers and at times, without ever joining it, with the French Communist Party.

This might seem like a radical difference after all, but the gap between the two authors may not appear to be so great when we recall that both continued to recognize that, like it or not, they themselves would always remain "bourgeois." The hatred of the bour-

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geoisie in either case was never fully separable from a self-loathing. All the more reason, then, for Sartre to condemn Flaubert for his refusal to side with the Commune in 1871; Flaubert, like Sartre, was a bourgeois at war with himself, but instead of siding, according to Sartre, with those (the workers) who could help give his life a meaning, who could direct him away from his state of inner conflict, he sided with an *enemy* sworn to maintaining the very bourgeoisie that both men hated.

We can say, then, that the Flaubert biography is an adjunct of Sartre's own autobiography. The biography's central problematic, however, the analysis of bad faith, can be seen in Sartre's writing a good twenty years before the publication of *The Words* (1963), his official autobiography. For already in "Childhood of a Leader," the longest short story in the collection *Intimacy* (1939), we see the same "complexes" that mark the young Flaubert. Lucien Fleurier is a pampered rich child, given to play-acting; his bad-faith gestures at home are inseparable from his latent sadism and masochism. As he matures, these tendencies develop, and he first becomes a surrealist, then a homosexual. Finally he leaves these juvenile diversions behind and becomes what he concludes he always was destined to be: a fascist.

This is the model that Sartre used, with very few changes, in all his biographical writings. The rationale for the analysis is presented in *Being and Nothingness*. As "existential psychoanalysis," the critique attempts to find the source of the "neurosis" not in any mysterious Oedipal complex linked to an unconscious, but in an originative choice taken freely by the subject at an early age. This choice is precisely to refuse to make choices or to take responsibility for what he does; the play-acting child both recognizes that he "is" what he acts before his elders, but at the same time he posits himself as *other* than his dramatic or comedic creation. He is always at some lofty remove, not really involved in his everyday behavior. The unfortunate result of all this is that reality itself comes to be "inauthentic" and torn in two: everything is "mugging," nothing has substance. Little Lucien sadistically lashes out at all those "unreal" objects (and, in the end, people: the Jews) and in a parallel effort to give himself some "reality," no matter how degrading, he masochistically accepts humiliation from a homosexual.

Flaubert's childhood "complex" is no different. Addicted to dramas that he puts on in his parents' billiard room, the little "Gus-

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tave" loves to humiliate himself as a comic. In this way, he struggles against his father's, and by extension the world's, omnipotence and empty values. Sartre says:

> He [Flaubert] makes people laugh at him out of disgust with himself and humanity; he destroys, in his person, and publicly, all human values in order to show that he is unworthy of them and, at the same time, that they are unworthy of his immense, grotesque desire. His sole purpose is to provoke horror and contemptuous, condemning laughter: if *that's* all the world is, I'll show what I think of it by becoming filth myself.

Out of impotent defiance springs the young Flaubert's masochism (and later sadism). One can see how much this brand of "psychoanalysis" depends on the Nietzschean critique of "ressentiment." As with the figure of "Poulou" (Sartre himself as a child) in *The Words*, the very young Flaubert soon runs up against a prohibition that puts an end to the play-acting and leads him to writing. In Poulou's case it was the family itself, which originally had encouraged the performing, that came to object to it; in Flaubert's it is the father who objects to a career in the theater. In other words, the child is forced to recognize his own status, the nature of his own gesture of refusal or ironization, through theatricality. As a result, however, he is not cured but driven further inward: the play-acting which was directed outwards "for others" is now turned around and becomes his "being-for-himself." It becomes the private act of writing: the little comic becomes a literary man. Sartre states:

> Since literature, for the child, is primarily dramatic art *denied*, it seems to him [Flaubert] to embody his unsociability—his exile in himself. The denial circumscribes and sanctions his *anomaly*: he is already laughable—hence the object of a minor disgrace—but by forbidding them to exploit his social character, the others force him to defend himself *by taking himself seriously*.

Never has a bleaker view been taken of comedy, of childhood, or of literature. The intellectual, finally, is nothing more than a spoiled, histrionic brat who only half-represents his theatricality by raising it to a higher level of self-awareness and transforming it into mendacious writing.

Where does this leave us? Sartre, when subjecting himself to a similar analysis, was at least capable of situating it fully in the past:

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we know he had at least removed himself enough from the "complex" to analyze it. But even at this relatively early stage of the Flaubert biography we know that there is no hope for Gustave. He will die a reactionary; he will never find the stance that would at least allow him to see the pitfalls of his "complex," if not overcome them. He will never be able to accede to authenticity by entering into an alliance with the working class.

We are forced to return, nevertheless, to the suspicion mentioned earlier. This Flaubert biography is simply another version of Sartre's autobiography. In each, the central problematic of bad faith, play-acting, and writing is the same. Our suspicions increase when we recognize that this "biography" is as much a product of Sartre's imagination as it is of Flaubert's life: incidents about which nothing is known are presented and speculated upon; a few references in a letter justify an extended analysis of the hypocrisy and guilt of a "little boy." Never are texts, the only things we really have to go on, seriously read (Sartre planned a fourth volume, to be devoted to an analysis of *Madame Bovary*, but it was never written). This biography is a work of Sartre's imagination—or, put another way, of his own life. Sartre is writing himself in this biography, but himself as the "reactionary" Flaubert, without the optimistic (and no doubt misleading) possibility of incessant dialectical renewal that characterizes his own position in the closing pages of *The Words*. (In that work, Sartre never posits the possibility of his own *definitive* escape from bad faith.) In any case, after death one can no longer continue to write his way out of bad faith: it has the last laugh. At the end of his life, Sartre is writing the impossible autobiography; in this work, the subject is already dead, beyond redemption, but in the person of Sartre he is still writing. In his biography of the dead Flaubert, the living Sartre has written the only *complete* autobiography, because he has written it from beyond the grave. He thereby escapes falling into a definitive bad faith. Loser wins: Sartre gains a transcendent viewpoint after all, but one perhaps not unlike that held by the young "Poulou," sitting in his grandfather's study and contemplating his own posthumous literary glory.

ALLAN STOEKL

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ON PAUL ZWEIG

DEPARTURES. MEMOIRS. By Paul Zweig. Harper & Row. $16.95.

Sex and death. They are everywhere in *Departures*, the late Paul Zweig's second book of memoirs. In *Three Journeys*, the poet's earlier work of reminiscence, sex (interlaced with left-wing politics) was already an obsession, with Zweig meticulously cataloguing his numerous carnal triumphs in the Paris of the sixties.

Death, however, was a subject new to the writer, not quite an obsession, but, in light of the lymph cancer that eventually killed him at the ripe age of forty-nine, yet another "endeavor" he took up with gusto in order to recreate himself.

From the start of his career, Zweig's great theme was self-creation. Yet he did not merely write about the subject repeatedly in such works of criticism as *The Heresy of Self-Love, The Adventurer,* and his study of Whitman, the greatest of all self-creators. Zweig was, in reality, always fleeing to exotic climates in search of a more suitable identity, one more to his liking.

He wished to be anything but what history had dealt him: a Jew, an American, a Brooklynite. "I possessed a mobility," he writes in *Departures*, "that could thrust me into any character but the abandoned one of a boy born in Brooklyn who, in his flight from home, had gone too far; who always seemed to go too far."

Wherever Zweig settled, though, he tended to be restless, dissatisfied. Nothing assuaged his quest for identity. Though he writes of sex as the means for the complete dissolution of self, it proved to be only temporary solace. In *Three Journeys*, he states that when it became clear to him that he and his fellow communists would not "bring down" capitalism, he sought "to cure (his) anxiety by making love as frequently as possible. Fucking became a form of exercise, an erotic jogging."

The theme is embellished in *Departures*. "When we made love," Zweig writes, "Claire would seem to bend into a depth, holding her breath and reaching, and then, with a helpless gulp, find what she had been reaching for, and expand. At that moment, I felt that I had spooned something rich and sweet from inside a deep cup and drank it, and had become her as she had become me. It was that exchange of selves I reached for; to cast myself away and receive in my place another me, a woman-self whose body took in, took in endlessly."

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The one thing that separates *Departures* from *Three Journeys*, however, is the introduction of death, and it makes its entrance, not surprisingly, through the province of sex. Zweig reads in the paper about the death of his friend David; then he is told that a friend of his mistress Claire is also dying. Death suddenly seems to be "working overtime" in his life, and his anxiety leads to impotence.

He receives a letter from David's widow, Anna, that renders him even more helpless. She describes her husband's death as "both terrible and joyous. During the last weeks we had a nonstop party, and there was sex everywhere. It was unbelievably desperate and swell. People fucked in every room. David lay in bed, with me on one side and another woman on the other. We did things to him, and he laughed. He never got out of bed; his bed was the center of the party. It was uncanny, there was so much love."

But Zweig's penis is now "dead," "the appendage of an anxiety," he writes, "that . . . was seeping and expanding. Maybe sex and death could be full of love: but with me it had been different. I had been defeated by them. I could not even mourn properly for my friend."

Part One of *Departures* ends with Zweig leaving Paris—his home for ten years and, as he says, the scene of the only life he had ever known—and heading for America. But even the descriptions of his childhood that fill the early pages of the next essay are dense with metaphors of death.

"I was brought up as a child of silence," Part Two begins. "Silence about the Holocaust, and then, during the Cold War, silence about politics. . . . They [Zweig's parents and neighbors] had spent forty years forgetting the past. But now it wasn't merely forgotten, it was plowed under, erased; written not in words, but in thick oily smoke on an unblinking sky. But they never talked about the Holocaust. In my house, it was present as a silent bewilderment and a struggle to be cheerful. I remember it, I suppose, as a lack of light in the various apartments we lived in, or as a sagging in my grandmother's face. To be a Jew, when I was a boy, was to be unhappy, unspeaking; it was to live with an invisible limit."

Zweig tried to deny that there were limits. In *Departures*, he notes that at first all he wanted from life was "a limited existence: an enchanted ordinariness as an engineer, living in a tract house in Queens, or as an elementary school teacher in Brooklyn, living in a tenement, with a shopping street downstairs and the smell of food in the hallway. But then would come the dark shove, the loose wire in

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my genes, and I would start on some baffling new course: a marriage, a religious conversion, an obsession that filled my life with strangeness."

Yet midway through his forties comes "another sort of shove—even darker, more arbitrary" when he discovers that he is suffering from cancer. Now death was no longer "a neurotic tune I wrote about in poems," but rather a heaviness that invades his whole body.

He enters into the struggle a bit dazed but hoping for a good fight. The randomness that has characterized his life, he believes, has prepared him for his entrance into the life of dying—"the life of all life, perhaps, but starker and more intense in [his] case." Zweig speaks of his illness as possibly his "final incarnation."

From this point on, the writing becomes extremely terse, unlike the sometimes heady, sometimes overwritten passages devoted to sex. Zweig is not being cold and clinical, but rather exact, wishing to get every detail right. "I remember the sizzling of the electric knife; the odor of burnt blood; the pushes and clips of the tools in the freshly opened slit. I lay there as if clubbed, not thinking, not thinking. Then the doctor lifted out the rubbery clot, dropped it into a container, and went down the hall to get a quick reading by the pathologist."

There are desperate and despairing moments as the writer submits to battery after battery of tests and the inevitable chemotherapy. But near the end of this brief—because incomplete—essay, there comes a moment of illumination and peace that is directly in line with the history of self-creation in Zweig's work. "I saw that a writer's immortality exists in the moment of conception, in which language has seized hold of him, and not in the posterity which few of us believe in. . . . A work is not a life, but writing is living, and now especially I wanted to live with all my might. I wanted to fight off the shrinking effect of fear. Therefore, I wrote my book, while I waited for the blood tests to speak."

In *Departures* and in the last book of poems he wrote during the period of his illness, *Eternity's Woods,* Paul Zweig rose to the occasion with mastery and wit, and without a drop of self-pity.

ROBERT LEITER

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MIDDLETON AND MENASHE

TWO HORSE WAGON GOING BY. By Christopher Middleton.
Carcanet. $8.50.
COLLECTED POEMS. By Samuel Menashe.
The National Poetry Foundation. $18.00.

Christopher Middleton is a poet of pure and private resource. He fishes by obstinate isles, far from the often academic agitations that ruffle the waters of the American poetry "scene." British by birth, a professor and translator of German literature by vocation, Middleton has lived for the last few decades in Austin, Texas. These statistics from his *vita* only partially map his singularity. His poetic temperament determines the rest: Middleton is a European modernist; his expression transects a Germanic (Rilkean) lyricism with the synaptic disjunctions of Dada. Needless to say, his name lights up few of our poetry marquees—modernism has never really found a place in our literature. Thus, while the publication of *Two Horse Wagon Going By* (timed to coincide with Middleton's sixtieth brithday) should be an occasion for redressing the balance, winning for him the readers and critics he deserves, things will probably not change. Idiosyncrasy and difficulty remain a guarantee of marginality.

Two Horse Wagon Going By is divided into two sections, "Silent Rooms in Several Places" and "Apocrypha Texana." The poems in the latter section tend to be based in the geography—and, in some cases, built around the speech patterns—of Middleton's adopted locale. Insofar as they implement a recognizable narrative structure, they offer an easy entry point to the work of an otherwise demanding artist. Stanzas like the following, about the killing of a coral snake, are almost entirely transparent:

> When I looked again
> The small black head with its yellow nape band
> Was pointing up and the mouth, opening, closing,
> Snapped at air to repel the blind force
> Which held him down.
>
> I could not do it, not to him, looking so
> True to himself, making his wisdom tell,
> It shot through me quicker than his poison would:

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The glory of his form, delicate organism,
Not small any more, but raw now, and cleaving,
Right there, to the bare bone of creation.
—from "Coral Snake"

But this is hardly the conventional Middleton mode. We are more likely to find an accelerated, compacted idiom, as in this section from the long poem "Rilke's Feet":

Or Rilke had no feet at all
What he had was fins
Up he twiddles into the air

Sycamore seed going the wrong way
Lands in my tree
Owl's eyes large liquid

Blink at me Contrariwise
He has no body just a head
Thought a little girl

No body in his clean but threadbare
Clothes crossed the room
And took a cake with Mama later

Off again
Somehow bowing
Where can he have put that cake

Middleton is playing, but as anyone who has been a child can tell you, there is nothing more serious than play. In these fleet fifteen lines he finds both the truth and the absurdity within the popular image of the incorporeal poet. The vertical liberation, moving through rapid conversions from aqueous fins, to airborne propulsion, to the copter rotations of the sycamore seed, to the gathered stillness of the owl's blinking eyes is decisively joined to the droll imagining of the little girl—Rilke has gone from having no feet to having no body at all. The clever aptness of "Somehow bowing" puts the final spin on the passage.

In truth, there is no "conventional Middleton mode." Poems, as he wrote in his essay volume, *Bolshevism in Art* (Carcanet, 1978), are "active structures of eccentric feeling." Middleton's poems are flow-

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erings, zones of sensibility that have erupted into rhythm. He writes of "the birth of a phrase" as the origin of poetic composition. The poem, then, moves within the orbit of a given rhythmic trace, exploring and fulfilling its imperatives. This would account for the absolute distinctiveness of each separate poem — no set metric or agenda has been allowed to interfere with the life of the emerging organism.

In his prose-poem "Bivouac," Middleton recalls the belief of the Polish Chassidim, that a "pneuma" (or spirit-breath) dwelt within the pages of the sacred texts. I like to think of Middleton's own poems as small gusts of pneuma, captured and shaped, waiting to be released by the eye and ear of the reader. Readers tired of the water diet of contemporary American poetry should break their involuntary fast here.

Middleton once characterized the prose style of Robert Walser as one of "snailhorn delicacy." The phrase, as I hope I have suggested, applies no less to his own work. But it can also be used with reference to the calibrated minims of Samuel Menashe. Like Middleton, Menashe is a poet of subtle breath stops and fine detail. He differs in that he is also a poet of overtly formal tendencies. Whether his occasion is light and celebratory:

Sky thrust from town
Vaults high towers
But comes down
To flowers
—"May"

or elegiac:

Darkness stored
Becomes a star
At whose core
You, dead, are
—untitled

or epigrammatic:

Sharpen your wit—
Each half of it—

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Before you shut
Scissors to cut

Shear skin deep
Underneath wool
Expose the sheep
Whose leg you pull
—"Scissors"

Menashe finds a way to let rhythmic expectation and rhyme work on his behalf. Spatial constriction appears to spark his inventiveness. Indeed, the reviewer very quickly begins to feel verbose and imprecise. I would as lief be brief: the garden is small, but the flowers grow tall. Portion the joy lest the rhyme start to cloy. This is good stuff; that said, enough.

SVEN BIRKERTS

THE WOLF MAN AND THE RAT MAN

CRIES OF THE WOLF MAN. By Patrick J. Mahony. Edited by the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis. International Universities Press. $25.00.
FREUD AND THE RAT MAN. By Patrick J. Mahony. With a Foreword by Otto F. Kernberg. Yale University Press. $23.50.

Patrick Mahony, a practicing analyst, is writing a trilogy about Freud's case histories; *Cries of the Wolf Man* and *Freud and the Rat Man* will be followed by a book examining Dora and Freud's other female patients. Mahony excludes Schreber and Little Hans, since Freud treated neither of them directly. By now there is a considerable literature about each of the five great case histories. Mahony mentions much of it, but ignores Henri Ellenberger's evidence (1972) which supported Carl G. Jung's contention that Freud had told him Anna O. was a therapeutic failure.

The Wolf Man, who figures so prominently in the movie *1919*, is the most famous of Freud's cases. In his *Cries of the Wolf Man*, Mahony announced that he was using "all available source material on the Wolf Man." He must qualify his claim by the use of the word "available," because the sealed Freud Archives contain an enormous

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amount of documentation about this particular patient: letters, transcripts of interviews, and even the draft of an unpublished case history by the Wolf Man's second analyst, Ruth Mack Brunswick.

Freud's own case history of the Wolf Man focused on an infantile neurosis connected with a childhood dream of wolves. Freud hypothesized that at the age of one, the Wolf Man had witnessed intercourse between his parents, *coitus a tergo*. This incident was, Freud thought at the time, absolutely essential in giving a concrete answer to both Alfred Adler and Jung; for while Jung in particular had maintained that infantile data arose defensively in a clinical context as a maneuver to distract the therapist and enable the patient to evade a current life task, Freud held to the concept that childhood incidents were in themselves capable of being pathogenic. (Mahony could have done more to make plausible the reservations by Jung and Adler.)

Freud never mentioned that as an adult the Wolf Man practiced anal intercourse. I raised the matter parenthetically in *Freud and His Followers* (1975)—a book Mahony cites. But he does not deal with the Wolf Man's adult sexuality. Ruth Mack Brunswick, when writing in 1929 about what the Wolf Man, according to Freud, had seen, added: "In part this observation, in part the predominantly anal nature of the patient himself, resulted in making this his usual form of sexual intercourse. Indeed, he practiced regularly not only *coitus a tergo*, but also anal intercourse." Brunswick's comment appeared in the official journal of the international psychoanalytic movement, and her name has been ineluctably linked to that of the Wolf Man ever since Freud's referral of his expatient to her for further analysis. Yet the conformist pressures of the profession seem to have ordained that the Wolf Man's sexual preferences never receive appropriate attention.

Although Freud discusses the connections to homosexuality, he tells us nothing about the Wolf Man's adult sexual practices. What are we to make of the contrast between what Brunswick tells us to have been true, and this eerie silence elsewhere? Reticence, repression, deception, or ignorance seem as significant as any of the Wolf Man's "cries." The Wolf Man's sexual practices, I believe, influenced Freud's reconstruction of the supposed infantile neurosis. And nonreproductive sexuality as well seems to have played a more interesting part in Freud's thought than has been acknowledged. Freud's special interest in the Wolf Man might have been partly fueled by, for example, the anal intercourse that Freud disguised in

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writing up his case. Such a curious preference in a heterosexual must have had psychological significance, and could even bear on the suicide of his wife.

Mahony considers the Wolf Man case history as Freud's "best," but does not fully appreciate the full imaginative quality of Freud's writing. Unlike my own reaction to the Wolf Man—as being a character out of Dostoevsky—Mahony understands him as having "endured his miserable life." Mahony is correct in questioning aspects of Freud's reconstruction of the infantile primal scene which have been too passively accepted by analysts, and he is skeptical enough to wonder whether the toddler "saw his parents making love one, two, three times, in a position from the rear, at five in the afternoon." Mahony is left "only blinking and wide-eyed" at "Freud's cameo of stupendous detail. . . ." Other readers, however, by the time they get to that famous scene, have been overwhelmed by Freud's literary prowess and have more or less suspended critical judgement.

In the story of the Wolf Man Freud trumps up his evidence in behalf of infantile sexuality. But his sleights of hand are being overlooked in the professional literature. Muriel Gardiner—a patient of Ruth Brunswick's and apparently the model of Lillian Hellman's "Julia"—though a pillar of integrity in contrast to Hellman's artistic lies, did shape the material about the Wolf Man to suit the needs of conservative psychoanalysis.

In *Freud and the Rat Man*, Mahony was able to work from a copy of Freud's original clinical notes, and his most striking conclusion is that Freud had in his case history engaged in a "fictive manipulation of time." Freud not only changed events for the sake of constructing a better story, but treated the Rat Man for only a few months, and not the one year that Freud claimed. In Mahony's view Freud's therapeutic results, again in contrast to Freud's version, amounted to a "symptomatic remission." Freud was engaging in "therapeutic exaggeration" for the sake of promoting his psychoanalytic cause. And Mahony makes no bones about Freud having tried to "indoctrinate" his patient with psychoanalytic teachings.

Throughout both books Mahony objects to the translations by James Strachey, his "staid Victorian prose, its cleaning up of Viennese colloquialisms, its reliance on Greek and Latin to render the familiar in German . . . and its tendency to substitute the past and its toning down for the immediacy and vividness of Freud's present tense." Yet like Bruno Bettelheim, Mahony seems to forget that

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Freud not only picked Strachey as a translator and was delighted with what he did, but to Strachey's undying pride even used the word "cathexis" in one of his final German texts.

Mahony is doubtless right in thinking that Strachey's "idealizing transference" to Freud resulted in a "doctoring up" of Freud's own words. But Mahony's point about Strachey's relationship to Freud might also be extended to embrace Strachey's reserve about asking to see the available Freud manuscripts. As a result Strachey's edition for the most part was based on the publications that appeared in Freud's lifetime. As Mahony points out, Freud spoke about the Rat Man at six meetings of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. Yet, he uncritically quotes from the *Minutes* of those proceedings without even identifying the translator, while being wary of Strachey's job which, I suspect, was more literate than the one done on the *Minutes*. Still, whatever Mahoney has done with the early history of psychoanalysis, his books seem to signal a new tolerance of differing viewpoints without perpetrating the old myths about the betrayals, deviations, or heretical secessions.

PAUL ROAZEN

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LETTERS

To the Editor:

"The language school writers," Tom Clark observes in his review—or, more accurately, his gossip column—about Ron Silliman's poetry anthology *In the American Tree* ("Stalin as Linguist," *PR* 2, 1987), "are as long on critical theory as they are . . . short on poems." Surely no one can accuse Clark of the same! This is not the place to discuss his own very short poems (which he is certainly not "short on"), but let me express my astonishment that *PR*'s editors let the following example of Clark's own "criticism" pass: "In his prose [Barrett] Watten seems to owe a debt to the distancing and disjunction methods of the Russian Formalists, especially Viktor Shklovsky. His interest in Shklovsky reflects the leftist stance that's common among language school writers."

An "interest in Shklovksy" need reflect no such thing. Does Tom Clark really not know that Shklovsky, one of the fathers of Russian Formalism and a friend of the great Futurist poets Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, and Mayakovsky, insisted on a rigid separation of art from politics well into the twenties, thus coming under sharp attack from, among others, Trotsky? That as late as 1926, in his autobiography *The Third Factory*, Shklovsky was given to statements such as " . . . dialectical materialism is a very fine thing for a sociologist, but it is no substitute for a knowledge of mathematics or astronomy"? And that it was only under the pressure of the Stalinist regime that Shklovsky began to write "politically correct" (and correspondingly negligible and today little-known) criticism?

Given Clark's seeming ignorance of Russian Formalist theory, one wonders how much he is likely to know about poststructuralism, whose manifestation, in the writings of Ron Silliman, George Lakoff, and others, he so wittily dismisses as "pretentious intellectual *argot* that sounds a little like an assistant professor who took a wrong turn on the way to the Derrida Cookout and ended up at the poetry reading." Clearly, Mr. Clark himself hasn't been attending too many Derrida cookouts lately. For at the most recent one I attended, I could swear I saw a bona fide poet, none other than France's Yves Bonnefoy, toasting his hot dog. Or was that a poetry reading?

Marjorie Perloff
Stanford, California

The Editors reply: We are surprised that Marjorie Perloff is unaware that we do not censor contributions to the magazine.

Tom Clark replies:

If Professor Perloff had been interested in the sense of my article she would have recognized that by

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saying Watten's "interest in Shklovsky reflects the leftist stance that's common among language school writers," I was *not* making the absurd generalization that *all* people interested in Shklovsky are "leftists"; my implication, rather, was that in the present case Shklovsky is being made use of in order to create a leftist *pose*. I believe this distortion of my point (and it was a point I made *in passing*, by the way) is disingenuous on Professor Perloff's part, intended not to speak to the question at hand (the boring and pretentious character of the work contained in the book I was reviewing) but to give herself a convenient platform for displaying her own extensive acquaintance with Russian Formalism (and thus to imply my ignorance of same, though in fact her knowing about it hardly proves I don't). This is simply rank-pulling, and has about as much to do with the issues in question as does the length of my poems or the significance of Yves Bonnefoy's hot dog. Let's drop the snide innuendoes. If Professor Perloff cares to make some defense of the *literary quality* of the "poetry" (long, short, or toasted) in *In The American Tree*, I'd love to hear it!

Tom Clark
Berkeley, California

To the Editor:

It was a pleasure to see Tom Clark's essay debunking the tactics and the essentially phony credo of the language poets. Their methods obviously are totalitarian. Instead of threatening to withdraw financial support from *Poetry Flash,* wouldn't it be somewhat more morally enlightening for them to be talking about writing more vigorous and irresistible poetry? Of course, before they even set ink to paper, these slaves to theology have already rendered any significant poetry impossible by selling themselves to what Edgar Allen Poe called the didactic fallacy. One regrets the tedium more than the wasted postage stamps these folks are responsible for.

Robert L. Greenfield
Goleta, California

To the Editor:

I wish to add a word to Paul Schwartz's essay on the disputes in West Germany occasioned over the contemporary discussion of the Nazi past ("Recent Public Trends in West Germany" *PR* 2, 1987). I have no argument with his criticisms of Ernst Nolte, as well as with some of Andreas Hillgrüber's book, *Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerstörung Deutschlands und das Ende des europäischen Judentums (Double Collapse: The Destruction of Germany and the End of European Jewry),* but I would add the following. It is, as Charles Maier noted in *The New Republic*, not an evil book, "but it is badly balanced and opens the way to apologia."

Andreas Hillgrüber, however, has not been a writer of unbalanced or apologetic history. Quite the contrary. It was Hillgrüber who, more

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than any other West German, Israeli, British or American historian, documented and analyzed the centrality of Hitler's racist ideology and its impact on his foreign policy in his *Hitler's Strategie (Hitler's Strategy)* published in West Germany in 1965, and again in 1967 in *Deutschlands Rolle in der Vorgeschichte der beiden Weltkriege*, published in English translation in 1981 by Harvard University Press as *Germany and the Two World Wars*. Both these works were published at a time when much of the West German neo-Marxist literature of the period was fiercely resisting addressing the "superstructural" matters of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. In his now standard major works, Hillgrüber stressed that all military decisions were subordinated to Hitler's racist goals, a point he reiterates in *Zweierlei Untergang*: "All decisions about power politics and military aims. . .were subordinated to the realization of the 'biological revolution' derived from his race doctrine." Hillgrüber further stresses the mixture of racism and opportunism that pervaded the German government, civil service, military, and transportation system that allowed the extermination to proceed, the acceptance by the population of "at least darkly suspected horrible deeds," and the "most shocking" participation by highly educated, presumably cultured university graduates.

Hillgrüber is one of the West German historians whose works have demonstrated how Hitler's ideology and actions placed the destruction of European Jewry in the center of Nazi foreign policy. In any account of the recent disputes over German history, fairness requires recording Hillgrüber's contributions in this regard, especially in view of the slighting of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust in the Marxist and neo-Marxist discussions of "fascism" of the sixties and seventies in West Germany. Thomas Nipperdey, one of West Germany's finest modern historians, rightly noted that the recent dispute yet again demonstrated the importance of the autonomy of scholarship and the damage it suffers when it seeks to place itself at the service of politics, be it the current call for national self-assertion or, earlier, for anticapitalism of the left.

Jeffrey Herf
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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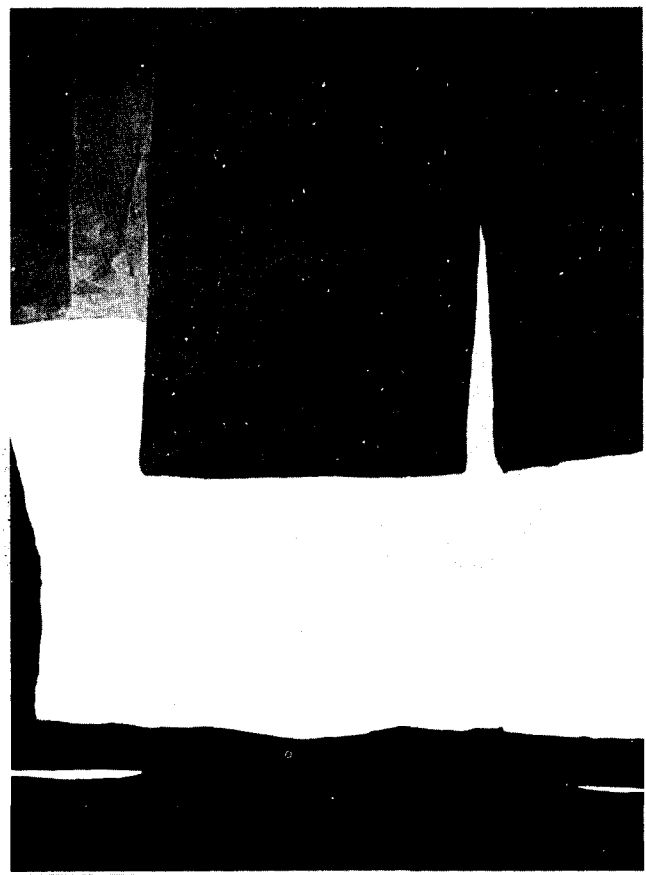

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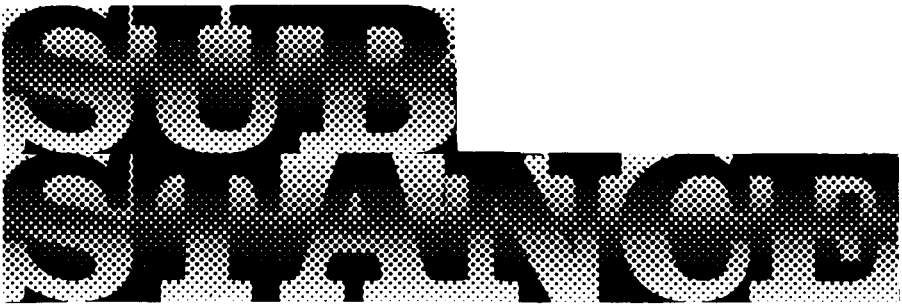

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